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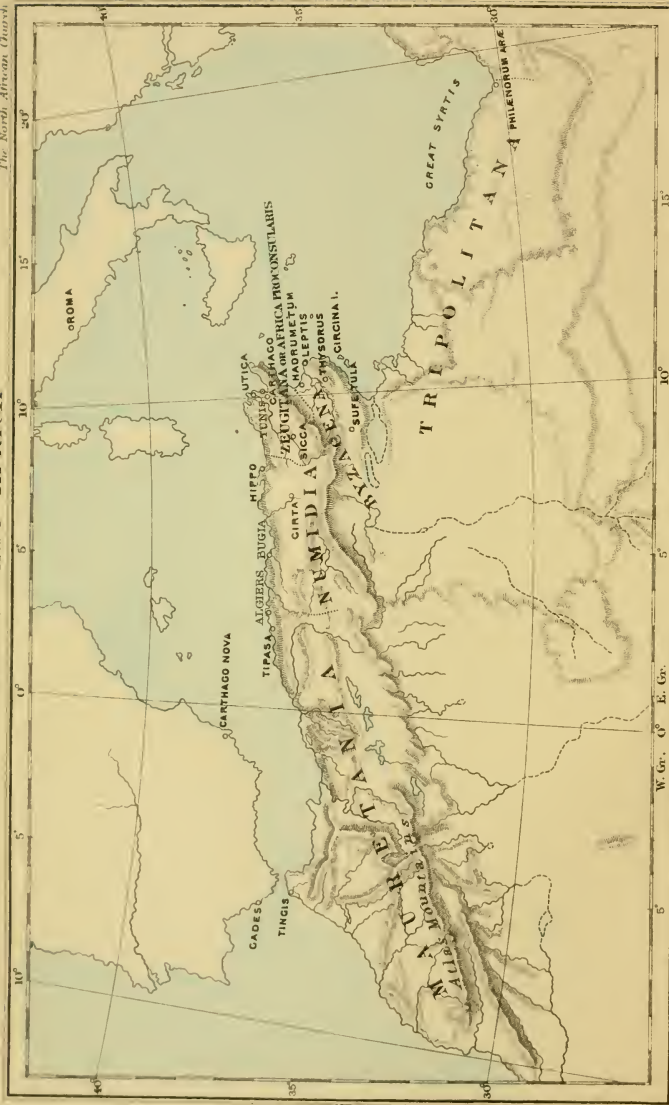
THE NORTH AFRICAN CHURCH.





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THE NORTH AFRICAN CHURCH.

BY  
JULIUS LLOYD, M.A.

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# THE NORTH AFRICAN CHURCH.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE PROVINCE OF AFRICA.

IN the multitude of Jews who were assembled at Jerusalem from all parts of the world at the feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles, were some who are described as having come from "the parts of Libya about Cyrene." This district adjoins that which was formerly called Africa; a name which, like that of Asia, spread with advancing knowledge until, from denoting a single province, it became the name of an entire continent. Libya was the common Greek name for the African territory, so far as it was known to the Greeks. Africa proper was the portion which belonged to Carthage in the latest period of Carthaginian independence, a district at the north-east angle of the coast, opposite Sicily, about as

large as Portugal, and corresponding nearly in its limits with the modern province of Tunis. But already in the time of Sallust,<sup>1</sup> a little before the birth of Christ, Africa was used as a general name for the whole region westward of Cyrene to the Atlantic Ocean. It was a fertile and prosperous land, the coast-line being studded with numerous flourishing cities, of which Carthage was by far the most important.

There is good reason to suppose that the Jews of the dispersion were settled in considerable numbers in Carthage and the neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> The great commercial importance of the city, its ancient relations with Phœnicia, the large number of Jews who frequented other Mediterranean sea-ports, the fact that 35,000 Jews are to be found in the city of Tunis at this day, altogether forms a body of circumstantial evidence, which appears conclusive. Jews were certainly to be found as near as Tripolis in large numbers; and as the city of Carthage increased rapidly in population during the Apostolic age, it is likely that the Christian faith was made known in the province of Africa before the end of the first century, brought thither by Jews from Cyrene, or from Rome, or direct from Judæa.

Cyrene, the chief of a group of five Greek cities, is the most probable of these three sources. The Cyrenian Jews were distinguished for their active

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<sup>1</sup> *Jugurtha*, xvii.

<sup>2</sup> See Farrar, *St. Paul*, i. 125; Josephus, *Antiquities*, xvi. 6, 5.



interest in the Christian faith, both as enemies and as friends. Representatives of a synagogue of Cyrenians were prominent among the antagonists who disputed with Stephen;<sup>1</sup> and Cyrenian converts, among whom are named a certain Lucius and possibly also Simeon called Niger, were among the Christians of Antioch, who took part in the solemn act of sending Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey.<sup>2</sup> Another Cyrenian, Simon, who bore the cross of Christ at His crucifixion, is described by St. Mark as the "father of Alexander and Rufus:"<sup>3</sup> a suggestive notice, for it implies a familiar knowledge of the sons of Simon on the part of the Evangelist and his readers. Thus the Jews of Cyrene seem to have been among the first to oppose, and among the first to receive, the Gospel. In the warfare which the Church waged against Judaism and paganism, the foremost champions on the one side were often killed as martyrs, and those on the other side were often taken prisoners as converts. What is known of the zeal and energy of the Cyrenians justifies the supposition that they were not long in handing on the Gospel to their neighbours in the province of Africa. At all events, however planted and watered, the Christian faith made progress along the whole North African coast with extraordinary rapidity. The African Church comes to light as a large and zealous society, before the end of the second cen-

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<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 9.<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 1.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark xv. 21.

tury after the birth of Christ, being to all appearance far more vigorous than the Church of Rome or of Alexandria at that time.

There appears to be no sure ground for the conjecture that Carthage was indebted to Rome for the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> In facilities of intercourse with the Holy Land, Carthage was not inferior to Rome. Its maritime position was more favourable, and though the city of Carthage had not, in the age of the Apostles, risen again from its ruins to the greatness which afterwards made it a rival of Rome in population, the whole surrounding district swarmed with inhabitants.

From the second century to the fifth, Rome itself was not more important than Carthage as an ecclesiastical centre. In the time of St. Augustine, the number of African dioceses was 466, extending along the whole northern coast of the Mediterranean, from a boundary line west of Cyrene. But a still larger number of dioceses existed at one time or another. Without including doubtful names, which seem to be corruptions of others, there are 579 distinct sees of which the names are preserved: of which 108 are in proconsular Africa; 151 in Numidia; 139 in Byzacena, of which the civil

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, i. p. 115 (Torrey's translation): "In consequence of their connection with Rome, the Gospel early found its way to Carthage, and to the whole of proconsular Africa. The Church at Carthage becomes first known to us in the last years of the second century, through the presbyter Tertullian; but it was then evidently in a very flourishing state." See Morcelli, *Africa Christiana*, i. 10.

metropolis was Adrumetum ; 49 in eastern Mauretania, now part of Algeria ; and 127 in western Mauretania, corresponding nearly to Morocco ; besides 5 in Tripolis.<sup>1</sup> Several of these dioceses contained three or four score towns and villages. The provincial Councils of Carthage show, by their frequency, the active zeal of the members of the African Church ; and the questions which were resolved there for the first time are among the cardinal questions of Church doctrine and discipline, as to which the Canons of Carthage carry weight in the Universal Church to the present day. But the great and singular distinction of the African Church is to have produced three men who, for different reasons, stand as the foremost representatives of Western Christendom for three several centuries after the Apostolic age, namely, Tertullian in the second century, Cyprian in the third, Augustine in the fourth. Through their mouths the African Church, "being dead, yet speaketh ;" and though its place knows it no more, its spirit fills all Christendom.

As an introduction to the history of the African Church, some account must be given of the country and of the people by whom it was inhabited. The land was celebrated among the Romans for its extraordinary fertility. In no part of the world did the corn-fields bear such abundant increase ; in none did nature wear a more cheerful aspect.<sup>2</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Bingham, *Eccl. Antiq.*, Appendix to book ix. Morcelli enumerates 715.

<sup>2</sup> Newman, *Callista*.

was in Africa, on the slopes of Mount Atlas towards the ocean, that Greek fable placed the Gardens of the Hesperides. The cultivated lands of North Africa, sloping gradually in broad natural terraces from the mountains, were rich in depth of soil, and watered by the Bagradas and other rivers, flowing through well-wooded valleys. The mountain sides were clothed with noble forests of cedar and other trees. The palm, the orange, the olive, grew luxuriantly ; while the rose and other sweet-scented shrubs were so abundant that their flowers were distilled for odours. The landscape was diversified by the foliage of the fig and the vine, and the delicate flowers of the oleander.

Where nature is so bountiful, the art of man is apt to content itself with slight efforts. But the Carthaginians had an energy of character which gave no rest to themselves or to those who served them. They were distinguished among the nations of antiquity for their skill in agriculture. When the Romans took Carthage, they gave away carelessly to the Numidians all the Punic books which they found, except one. This one, Mago's treatise on agriculture, was translated into Latin, and was afterwards held in the highest esteem as an authority on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

The climate of North Africa is tempered by the snows of the Atlas range, and the heat is not often excessive. At some seasons of the year, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, *Carthage and the Carthaginians*, p. 44.

it is described by physicians as predisposing to two opposite extremes, indolence and violence. The sultry heat produces languor ; and the sirocco from the desert, loaded with fine grains of sand, is apt to cause a nervous irritation, which sometimes leads, through delirium, to murder or suicide.<sup>1</sup>

Of the people of ancient Carthage the dominant race were Phœnicians. According to the old legend, Dido, a princess of Sidon, nearly related to Ahab's queen, Jezebel, migrated to Carthage, and founded a city called Kirjath-Hadeskath, or New Town, which name was contracted and corrupted into Carthage. There were traditions of a still earlier migration. Procopius, writing in the sixth century after Christ, mentions two columns of white marble in Numidia, bearing the inscription, "We are they who fled from the robber Joshua son of Nun." The authority of Procopius is not sufficient to establish the fact of an inscription which, if it existed at all, must have been written in a language which was probably unknown to him.<sup>2</sup> But the Phœnician descent of the people of Carthage, at whatever date, is proved by indisputable evidence. The names of places and of persons are Phœnician ; the religion was Phœnician ; and the common people, when asked of what race they were, answered that they were Canaanites.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the Carthaginian names have a curious

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<sup>1</sup> Séguin, *Walks in Algiers*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, ii. 298 ; Movers, *Phönizier*, ii. 427.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, quoted by Bosworth Smith, p. 41.

relation to names in the Bible. Two names which occur in Virgil's *Æneid*—Elissa, the second and perhaps the proper name of Dido ;<sup>1</sup> and Anna, her sister, are nearly identical with the Hebrew names Elizabeth and Hannah.<sup>2</sup> The greatest of Carthaginians, Hannibal, bears a name which is cognate to the Hebrew name Johanan or John, being composed of two words which signify in the one case the grace of Baal, in the other the grace of Jehovah.

The chief gods of Carthage were the Syrian Baal and Ashtoreth. Each of these two underwent various modifications, while in general they represented the masculine and feminine powers of nature.<sup>3</sup> Baal was the sun-god, the god of fire, of light, of health, and also of pestilence ; sometimes assuming the form of Apollo, sometimes that of *Æsculapius*, to the eyes of the imaginative Greek ; and more often wearing the hideous aspect of Moloch, when his worshippers immolated their children to him in the day of distress, or their captives in the day of triumph. Ashtoreth was the moon, the queen of heaven, the ruler of the night ; sometimes invested with the attributes of Diana, sometimes with those of Juno or Ceres, but popularly worshipped with the licentious orgies against which the prophets raised their inspired voice in Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> These names are certainly Phœnician, though the story, according to a modern theory, is mythical. See Movers, *Phönizier*, i. 609.

<sup>2</sup> See Gesenius, *De lingua Phœnicia*, pp. 350, 406. Also C. M. Yonge, *Christian Names*, vol. i. p. 90 ; Bosworth Smith, pp. 14, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Movers, i. 149.

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“Astoreth, whom the Phœnicians called  
Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns ;  
To whose bright image nightly by the moon  
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs ;  
In Sion also not unsung, where stood  
Her temple on the offensive mountain.”

The two together, Baal and Ashtoreth, presided over a religion of nature which, to thoughtful minds, was not incapable of association with sublime ideas ; but which, in its ordinary and popular form, consecrated the fiercest and grossest passions.

Another deity, belonging to another religious system, was also worshipped at Carthage. He was called the “King of the City,” Melech-Kirjath, a name which, contracted into Melkarth, was identified with the Greek Herakles, or Hercules.<sup>1</sup> Melkarth was the tutelary god of Carthage, and of other Phœnician towns, such as Tyre and Gades (the modern Cadiz).<sup>2</sup> No image or temple was known to have been erected to him at Carthage. His temple at Tyre also contained no image, but only two lustrous columns, one of gold, one of emerald.<sup>3</sup> The origin and meaning of this worship is unknown, but it appears to have been extremely primitive. It gives significance, on the one hand, to the title “Pillars of Hercules,” applied by mariners to the two mountains on either side of the straits of the Mediterranean, but said by the natives of Gades to be

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<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the Greek name, read from right to left, is nearly the same as Melkarth ; ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ.—Smith, *Dict.* “Phœnicia.”

<sup>2</sup> Gesenius, *De ling. Phan.*, pp. 352, 410. <sup>3</sup> Herodotus, ii. 44.



properly the pillars of their own temple;<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, the recurrence of two pillars in connection with the Tyrian worship of an invisible tutelary god, throws a dim light on the mysterious pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which Solomon's Tyrian builders erected in front of the Temple at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this worship may be associated with the early forms of patriarchal religion, which expressed itself in the erection of altars and pillars on any spot where the presence of God was specially felt as a protector, as by Jacob at Bethel; or solemnly invoked as a guardian of covenants, as by Jacob and Laban at the two heaps of stones which they erected in witness of their contract at parting.<sup>3</sup>

Two mounds, or altars, known as altars of the Philæni, were erected at an early date by the Carthaginians and Cyrenians, to mark the eastern boundary of the territory subject to Carthage. In this direction, between the greater and lesser Syrtis, is the land of the Lotos-eaters, celebrated by Homer,<sup>4</sup> where the companions of Ulysses, having tasted the sweet fruit of the lotos tree, forgot their home, and no longer desired to return. The plant, which is still better known by its Arab name, jujube, is a prickly shrub, bearing fruit about the size of olives.

The Carthaginians, like other members of the Phœnician race, were distinguished for ingenuity and enterprise. They were the greatest navigators

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<sup>1</sup> Strabo, iii.

<sup>2</sup> Movers, *Phönizier*, i. 293.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxxi. 51.

<sup>4</sup> *Odyssey*, ix. ; Herodotus, iv. 117.



of antiquity, and, as they pursued navigation for purposes of commerce, they became the wealthiest. Mercenaries were employed to fight their battles, and slaves to row their ships. The armed force which their wealth provided, and which their skilful policy directed, enabled them to keep the neighbouring cities in subjection. The western part of the Mediterranean became virtually a Carthaginian sea, until the strength of Carthage was broken by the Romans.

Aristotle praises the constitution of Carthage for its stability;<sup>1</sup> and the continued prosperity of the city for many centuries justifies the praise. There were two chief magistrates appointed for life, whom the Romans called kings, but whose actual title, Suffetes, was the same which is given in the Old Testament to the judges of Israel. There was a council of one hundred, forming part of a larger body, the senate; and there was also a popular assembly. For restless spirits in the city a wide field of adventure was open in maritime expeditions, which served to increase the wealth of the State. One famous navigator, Hanno, explored the west coast of Africa beyond the mouth of the Niger. Others formed colonies in Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, the Balearic Islands, and Spain. But about sixty years after Aristotle died, when Carthage had attained to her highest power, she came in conflict with a rival whose constitution was even more stable than her own.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, ii. 11.

The struggle between Rome and Carthage surpasses in interest all others recorded in ancient history. The vast scale of the Punic wars, the varied episodes by land and sea, the military genius displayed, and the extreme alternations of success and defeat, give to these wars a distinct and vivid character, which serves to place in its true light their world-wide importance. Rome fought for conquest, Carthage for existence ; but the stubborn persistence of the Romans was like that of men who are fighting for life, and the brilliant strategy of the Carthaginians was like that of men who are fighting for glory.

There was a vital difference between the political systems of the two States, which showed itself chiefly in their mode of dealing with their subject neighbours. Rome had learned to associate the other cities of Italy with herself, so that in her most extreme peril they continued firm and loyal allies. Carthage, with a more selfish policy, had kept her neighbours in a state of tributary dependence, and could never reckon upon their fidelity when they had an opportunity of throwing off the yoke. Whenever an invading army landed in Africa, it found its way open, almost to the walls of Carthage. Her jealousy had deprived the surrounding cities of the means of defence, and her oppression led them to give welcome to any stranger as a deliverer.<sup>1</sup> But Rome had adopted

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 55.

a more generous and far-sighted policy, with a better result. When Hannibal led his army through Italy, hoping to raise the Italian cities against Rome, he traversed the whole country in vain. Victorious in every battle, until he had all but destroyed the military power of Rome, he found himself still without allies. No city of the Latin name would join him; and, after years of waiting, he was constrained by danger at home to return to Africa, to find himself for the first time over-matched in contending for Carthage upon African soil.

A constitution such as that of Carthage, in which the government of many dependent cities and provinces is carried on by a few rich families, is favourable to the development of individual genius, but unfavourable to corporate action. No Roman family is to be compared with the Carthaginian family of Barca in the greatness of its chief members, Hamilcar, Hasdrubal, Hannibal. But the public spirit of the Roman people was a force which, in the end, gained the victory over the combined power of genius and of riches.<sup>1</sup>

The city of Carthage, said to contain 700,000 inhabitants, was destroyed by the younger Scipio in 146 B.C., and a curse was pronounced on any one who should rebuild it. Of the people, those who survived were dispersed or sold as slaves. The Carthaginian territory, reduced within narrower

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, *Hist. Rome*, vol. iii. p. 64, etc.

limits by the defection of the people of Numidia and Tripolis, was made a Roman province after the destruction of the city. By degrees the rest of North Africa was annexed to the dominions of the Roman Republic. From that time until the fall of Rome in the fifth century after Christ, North Africa was subject to Rome, and esteemed as one of her most valuable possessions, supplying what the populace most desired: abundant stores of corn, besides gladiators, lions, and elephants, for the sports of the circus.

But it was not possible for a people of so strongly marked a character as the Carthaginians to pass away without leaving behind a permanent impression. The influence of race and of training was transmitted to the whole surrounding district, and fostered by circumstances in some respects analogous. So, when Carthage rose from its ashes, in spite of Scipio's curse, the people of the restored city exhibited several of the characteristics of their predecessors. Carthage again became the metropolis of a populous district. Its commerce again spread far and wide. The energies of the people, finding little scope in government and war under the Roman Empire, turned into religious channels with extraordinary ardour.

The Church of North Africa, of which Carthage was the head, became distinguished for the pre-eminent genius of its leading men, and also for the disaffection of its subordinate members. So, in the comparison of ecclesiastical Carthage and eccle-

siastical Rome, history repeats itself. The Church of Rome, strong in mutual fellowship and organization, rode out the storms which wrecked the Church of Carthage, weakened by dissension, when both alike were exposed to similar perils.

The mixture of races which inhabited North Africa increased the difficulties of social fellowship. There were Phœnicians, Greeks, Libyans, Numidians, and Moors, each of which had elements of character uncongenial to the rest. The Phœnicians diffused their language widely. In Augustine's time, when Latin was the language of the towns, the country people only spoke Punic.<sup>1</sup> Of this language there are apparent traces in the dialect of the Kabyles at the present day.<sup>2</sup> The Phœnicians not only founded Carthage, but other cities, among the best known of which were Utica and the two Hippos to the north, Adrumetum to the south, Sicca far inland on a hill overlooking the tortuous course of the Bagradas, and Cirta in the heart of Numidia. Their energy and ingenuity had early showed itself in their mastery of the art of shipbuilding, in their invention of the alphabet, in the invention of glass, and of dyes, for which Tyre became a proverb. Nor does their skill appear to have declined, although in gracefulness and beauty of design they were surpassed by the Greeks.

The Greeks made their skill in the arts felt in

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<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* 209, quoted by Fleury, xxiv. 34. See the story of Antony of Fussala, pp. 265, 266. Also Robertson, *History of the Christian Church*, i. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Blakesley, *Algeria*, p. 150.

many ways, as makers of images for the wealthy Phœnicians, and as contributing to their civilization and culture. A Greek historian, Silenus, accompanied Hannibal in Italy, and he took lessons in Greek from another, Sosilus. Greek names have superseded the original designation of many places. The district adjacent to the cities of the Cyrenian Pentapolis was known as Tripolis; the promontory to the east of the Bay of Carthage was named Hermæum.

The Libyans were a dark-skinned race of the aboriginal inhabitants, who formed the bulk of the poorer population of the province.<sup>1</sup> A large half-caste population, called Libyo-Phœnicians, was a frequent source of danger to the Carthaginian State as their numbers increased; but means were found to employ them at a distance from home, and to use their strength in founding colonies.

To the west of the province of Africa lay Numidia, a pastoral country, scantily wooded and watered, and inhabited chiefly by wandering tribes, whose dwellings, rudely formed of earth and branches of trees, were abandoned whenever the need of better pasture or hunting-ground led them to migrate. Sallust<sup>2</sup> derives their names from their

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<sup>1</sup> "The northern region of Africa, in remote times, and before the arrival of Sidonian colonies, appears to have been inhabited by the various tribes of one extended race, by the Romans termed Afri, and by the Greeks, Libyes."—Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Jugurtha*, xviii. He also says that the name "Moor" is corrupted from "Mede."

nomad habits, and describes their habitations as like inverted boats. The name by which they were known, "Mapalia," is explained by other authors to denote a circular ring of huts like a modern South African kraal. One of the suburbs of Carthage bore this name.<sup>1</sup> In the wars between Carthage and Rome, the Numidian horsemen bore an important part. They were accustomed to ride their horses without saddle or bridle, with extraordinary speed and dexterity.

Beyond Numidia, westward, lay Mauretania, the country of the Moors, who were of more settled habits than the Numidians, an agricultural rather than a pastoral people, and not unskilled in industrial arts. Remains of forts, which are ascribed by the Moors of the present day to the Romans or Christians, are found on the flanks of the Atlas chain, as far south as the city of Morocco. Of the various native tribes, some built their dwellings of stone, others lived in black tents of camel's hair, others in huts slightly framed with boughs and cast-off garments. There were also said to be troglodytes, who lived in caverns of the Atlas Mountains,<sup>2</sup> and ran faster than horses. The Moors are not, as often supposed, negroes. Their features are sometimes as finely cut as those of Italians, and their skin is scarcely darker than that

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<sup>1</sup> "Mapalia" is the form of the word in Sallust. Virgil has "Magalia," *Æn.* iv. 259, as the name of the suburb of Carthage, which is called later "Mappalia," or "Mappalicus."

<sup>2</sup> Hooker, *Morocco*, pp. 24, 167, 30 .



of the inhabitants of the south of Europe, although their faces, exposed to the glare of a tropical sun, appear swarthy by contrast to the white mantles which enwrap their whole body.<sup>1</sup>

The heterogeneous mixture of races in the territory which was subject to Carthage, was a cause of weakness in the Punic wars, and operated in a very unfavourable manner on the prosperity of the Christian Church in North Africa. From the time at which we first hear of the rapid growth of the Church, we begin to hear also of dissensions among its members; and it is apparent that these dissensions were made more profound and bitter by wide differences in race and in culture. The refined and accomplished scholars who lived at Carthage or Hippo were as unlike the wild Numidians as any two classes of the human family could be; and disputes on whatever subject were not a little aggravated by this extreme social disparity.<sup>2</sup>

That the intellectual culture of Carthage in the time of its independence was at least equal to that of Rome, may be inferred from the fact that the earliest writer who gained a reputation for his polished Latin style—the comic poet Terence—was an African, a native of Carthage. Brought to Rome as a slave in early manhood, he first won the heart of his master and his master's friends, and afterwards that of the Roman people, who were roused into unwonted enthusiasm by his noble

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, *Travels in Barbary*.

<sup>2</sup> Morcelli, i. 18.



protest against the exclusiveness of national prejudice. No line of ancient poetry is more famous than his verse, "I am a man; my kindred is mankind;" "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto."

Augustus Cæsar, nineteen years before the birth of Christ, founded a Roman colony on the site of Carthage. To avert the curse which had been pronounced by Scipio, the spot originally chosen was at a little distance from the ancient citadel. But the colony prospered rapidly, favoured by the extraordinary advantages of its position, until it overspread the whole peninsula. The magnificent aqueduct, the amphitheatre, the vast cemetery, are signs of the greatness of restored Carthage.<sup>1</sup> There is also documentary evidence sufficient to show that the city of Carthage under the Romans recovered its ancient importance. According to Herodian, who wrote about the time when the Church of Carthage first becomes known through the persecution of the Christians by the Emperor Severus, himself a native of Africa, the city was only inferior to Rome in population.<sup>2</sup> The novelist Apuleius, whose fable of Cupid and Psyche is one of the most popular subjects of painting and sculpture,<sup>3</sup> was a Numidian, a native of Madaura, and was educated at Carthage in the second century after

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, on the ruins of Carthage.

<sup>2</sup> Herodian, vii. 6; see Smith, *Dictionary of Geography*, "Carthago."

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix, p. 403.

Christ. It happened also, by a remarkable coincidence, that the first eminent writer of ecclesiastical Latin was an African, as the first writer of classical Latin had been. Tertullian, like Terence, was born at Carthage, and from him dates a new literary style. He was the first to find Latin equivalents for the Christian ideas and words, which were unknown to pagan literature, and which had been expressed only in Greek before his time in the Christian Church. The diction of the Vulgate translation of the Bible and of the copious ecclesiastical literature of the Western Church has received a certain stamp from the idioms in which the Carthaginian Tertullian expressed his Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> This style he derived probably in part from older Latin versions of portions of the New Testament, now lost, which were current in Africa when the Church of Rome was as yet a society of Greek-speaking foreigners, under Greek bishops.<sup>2</sup>

Few of the early Bishops of Rome have Latin names. One of these, Victor, whose episcopate lasted from A.D. 185 to 198, is said to have been born in Africa,<sup>3</sup> and is the first African Christian whose name is recorded. He is noted for the imperiousness with which he insisted on the Roman use in keeping Easter on the first day of the week.

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, ii. 443.

<sup>2</sup> See Westcott on the "Vulgate" in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*; and Milman, *Latin Christianity*, i. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Biographie Universelle*.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE SECOND CENTURY.

THE Church of North Africa emerges suddenly out of darkness into broad daylight about A.D. 198, in the Apology for the Christian faith which was addressed by Tertullian to the Roman governors.<sup>1</sup> Previous history must either be inferred from the description of its state at that time, or else from the analogy of other Churches of which the origin is better known. By means of Tertullian's copious and vivid writings, the Church of Carthage, as it existed in his day, is placed on a level with the most noted parts of Christendom, in respect to the fulness of information which we gain as to its religious and moral character, its doctrine, and its manner of life.

Tertullian was the son of a proconsular centurion, and had applied himself to the study of law, when, in middle age, he was converted to the Christian faith, and assumed the pallium, which was a sign of

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<sup>1</sup> Pusey, *Introduction to Tertullian's Apology*, i.

Christian profession, probably in the year 196.<sup>1</sup> He was soon afterwards admitted to the priesthood, and appears to have lived chiefly at Carthage, though he also visited Rome. His wife, to whom he wrote two treatises on matrimony, was a Christian.

Unhappily, Tertullian is not a guide who can be followed in confident security, without criticism or caution.<sup>2</sup> His ardent vehemence of mind, which eventually led him into doctrinal errors, betrays itself in a frequent extravagance of language, a want of moderation, affecting his trustworthiness in matters of fact. He is too much a rhetorician to weigh his language, which often carries its own warning, as when, for instance, he dilates on the recent origin and rapid progress of Christianity: "We are of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only."

A few chapters before, he had said that Christianity dated from the age of Tiberius, so that his phrase, "We are of yesterday," is to be understood as covering the period of more than a century and a half; and the language in which he magnifies the numbers of the Christians may also be corrected by his description of the popular hatred towards them, and of the gross ignorance which prevailed concerning the nature of their religion. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Pusey, *Introduction to Tertullian's Apology*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> See Blunt, *On the Right Use of the Fathers*, p. 192.

chiefly to dispel this ignorance that he wrote. "Truth asks no favour for her cause," he says. "She knows that on earth she is a stranger, and that among aliens she may easily find foes. Her birth, her home, her hope are in the heavens. One thing meanwhile she earnestly desires, that she be not condemned unknown."

As to the unpopularity of the Christians, Tertullian says that the multitude, if they praise any individual Christian, mingle reproach of the name with their praise: "A good man, Caius Seius, only he is a Christian;" "I marvel that that wise man Lucius Titius hath suddenly become a Christian." Husbands, fathers, masters, deplore the reformation of morals which accompanies the Christian faith: "Virtue is not in such account as hatred of Christians." "If the Tiber comes up to the walls, if the Nile comes not up to the fields, if there is no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is a famine, or a pestilence, the cry immediately is, 'The Christians to the lions!'"<sup>1</sup>

Glancing at the cruel persecution which the Christians underwent at the hands of the magistrates, as too familiar to require description, he charges them with inconsistency for trying to force Christians by torture to deny their faith. "Other criminals are tortured in order that they may confess. Why are we alone tortured to make us deny that which we confess willingly?"

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<sup>1</sup> *Apology*, cap. xl.

A large part of Tertullian's *Apology* consists of an indignant exposure of the evils of paganism, its falsehoods, its follies, its enormities. Of apology, in the modern sense, there is little or none. He does indeed condescend to refute briefly the vulgar slanders against the Christians: that they meet in secret for impure and cannibal banquets, that they worship the emblem of the cross, that they worship the sun, and that strangest of calumnies, that they worship an ass's head.<sup>1</sup> But he refutes them with a haughty contempt, and finds in each false accusation some ground for a retort upon the pagans. Saturn devouring his children according to the ancient fable, the numberless absurd and loathsome superstitions known to be actually prevailing among the heathen, are subjects alternately of bitter irony and grave denunciation. His whole impeachment of paganism is expressed with a command of all the resources of oratory, and carries away the reader on a stream of fiery eloquence.

Greater historical interest, however, belongs to the statement which Tertullian gives of the doctrine and practice of the Christian Church. The points which he brings forward prominently are no doubt those which were felt in his time to be most important and most distinctive in relation to the

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, v. 3. The blasphemous graffito, or caricature, found on the walls of the Palace of the Cæsars, and preserved in the Jesuits' Museum at Rome, illustrates this calumny, which has its probable origin in Zech. ix. 9: "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; thy King cometh unto thee . . . riding upon an ass."

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heathen world of Carthage or Rome. The following sentences form a summary of his statement of Christian doctrine :—<sup>1</sup>

“That which we worship is the One God, who through the Word by which He commanded, the Reason by which He ordained, the Power by which He was able, hath framed out of nothing this whole material mass with all its furniture of elements, bodies, and spirits, to the honour of His Majesty.”

“He hath from the beginning sent forth into the world inspired men to preach that there is One God who hath created all things ; . . . who, when this world shall have been brought to an end, shall sentence His own worshippers to eternal life, the wicked into fire equally perpetual and continued ; all that died from the beginning being raised up and formed again, and called to an account for the recompense of each man’s deservings.”

Having shown the antiquity of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the apostasy of the Jews, he proceeds to unfold the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, whom he described in language afterwards adopted in the Nicene Creed, as “God of God,” “Light of Light.”

“God would henceforward, out of every nation and people and country, choose unto Himself worshippers much more faithful than the Jews. Of this grace the Son of God was proclaimed the Dispenser and the Master, the Enlightener and the Guide of the human race.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Library of the Fathers* (Pusey’s translation), cap. xvii., etc.



“Among your own wise men also it is agreed that Logos, that is, ‘Word,’ and ‘Reason,’ should be accounted the Maker of all things. . . . This we have learned was forth-brought from God, and by this forth-bringing was Begotten, and therefore is called the Son of God, and God, from being of one substance with Him. . . . This ray of God, as was foretold, entering into a certain virgin and endued with the form of flesh, is born Man joined together with God.”

Then follows a short narrative of the ministry of Christ, His miracles, His rejection by the Jews, His crucifixion, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven ; in which Tertullian follows closely the words of the Evangelists, not confining himself to any one Gospel, but showing an acquaintance with all four. He adds that the Emperor Tiberius was so moved by the reports which he received from Judæa concerning Christ, that he proposed to the senate that Christ should be enrolled among the gods ; but the proposal was rejected.

In the later chapters of his *Apology* he describes the constitution and way of life of the Christian society.

“We are a body formed by our joint cognizance of religion, by the unity of discipline, by the bond of hope. We come together in a meeting and congregation as before God, as though we would in one body sue Him by our prayers. This violence is pleasing to God. We pray also for em-



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perors, for their ministers and the authorities, for the condition of the world, for the quiet of all things, for the delaying of the end," that "the mighty shock which hangs over the whole world" may be deferred. "We come together to call the Sacred Scriptures to remembrance. By these holy words we feed our faith, raise our hopes, establish our confidence."<sup>1</sup>

Of the excommunication of unworthy brethren he says—

"It is a very grave forestalling of the judgment to come, if any shall have so offended as to be put out of the communion of prayer, of the solemn assembly of all holy fellowship."

"The most approved elders preside over all,' he says, "having obtained this honour not by money, but by character ; for with money is nothing pertaining to God purchased. Even if there be with us a sort of treasury, nothing is collected there to bring discredit on religion, as though she were bought. Every man placeth there a small gift on one day in each month, or whensoever he will. These deposits of piety are not disbursed in feasting and drinking, but for feeding and burying the poor, for orphans and aged men, for those who are shipwrecked, or any who, in the mines, or in the islands, or in prison, become the pensioners of their creed. It is the exercise of this sort of love which doth, with some, chiefly brand us with a mark

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<sup>1</sup> *Apology*, cc. xxxix., xxxii.

of evil. 'See,' say they, 'how they love each other!'"

He then contrasts the pagan festivals with the Christian agapæ. "Our feast shows its nature in its name. It is named by the word by which love is called among the Greeks. It allows nothing vile, nothing immodest. Men sit not down to meat before tasting, in the first place, of prayer to God. They eat as much as hungry men desire; they drink as much as is profitable for chaste men; they are so filled, as men who remember that during the night also they must pray to God; they so discourse as those who know that God hears. After that water for the hands is brought, each, according as he is able, out of the Holy Scriptures or of his own mind, is called upon to sing publicly to God. . . . In like manner prayer breaks up the feast."

From these passages of Tertullian, we have a distinct idea of the Christians of his time; and his picture of them is illustrated still further in the elaborate contrast between Christianity and paganism, which runs throughout his *Apology*. His treatise is discursive: continually digressing from the particular point before him, for the purpose of inflicting a controversial blow upon his adversaries; but the contrast which he draws may be summed up under three heads: the truth of Christian doctrine, as opposed to the falsehood of paganism; the purity of Christian morals, as opposed to pagan licentiousness; the brotherhood of Christian fellowship, as opposed to the selfishness and cruelty of paganism.

Truth, purity, brotherhood, express in three words the sum of his defence of Christianity.

The charge which required most vindication was that the Christians did not worship the heathen gods, and did not offer sacrifices for the emperors. With respect to the latter part of the charge, Tertullian contends that the Christians are as loyal subjects of the emperor as those who persecuted them. With regard to the former, he discusses at length, and with remarkable power, the origin of pagan worship, maintaining that Saturn, Jupiter, and the other gods were dead men deified, far less worthy of honour than such Greeks as Socrates and Aristides, or such Romans as Cato, Scipio, and others. He says sarcastically, "If Bacchus be therefore a god, because he first made known the vine, Lucullus, who first introduced cherries into Italy, has been hardly dealt with because he was not deified as the author of a new fruit." But he appeals to the works of nature, and the witness of the soul itself, in testimony to the existence of one God. The soul, he says, "though confined by the prison of the body, though straitened by evil training, unnerved by lusts, and made the servant of false gods, yet, when it wakes up in sound health, names God simply. 'Great God,' 'Good God,' 'which God grant,' are words in every mouth; 'God seeth,' 'I commend to God,' 'God shall recompense me.' O testimony of a soul by nature Christian!" he exclaims.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Apology*, ch. xvii.

On the suggestive topic of image-worship, Tertullian speaks after the manner of the Hebrew prophets. But he opens a different line of argument when he contends that the heathen gods are demons. On this subject he challenges a public trial. "Let some one be brought forward here, at the foot of your judgment seat, who is acknowledged to be possessed by a demon. When commanded by any Christian to speak, that spirit shall as truly declare itself a demon, as elsewhere falsely a god."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from Tertullian that one great cause of the popular hatred of the Christians was that they took no part in the public amusements. "We have no concern with the madness of the circus, with the immodesty of the theatre, with the cruelty of the arena." "But we are called to account on another charge of wrong, and are said to be unprofitable in the common concerns of life. How can this be said," he asks, "of men who live with you, who have the same food, dress, furniture, the same wants of daily life? For we are not Brahmans, dwelling in the woods."<sup>2</sup> We remember that we owe gratitude to God our Lord and Maker, and put not away from us any enjoyment of His works. It is true we refrain from using them immoderately or wrongfully. We live with you in this world, not without a forum, not without your baths, shops, inns, markets, and other places of

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<sup>1</sup> *Apology*, ch. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> The allusion is probably to Eastern fakirs.

traffic. We voyage with you, serve in your armies, labour with you in the fields, and trade with you. . . . If I attend not the solemnities of your holy day, I am nevertheless on that day also a man. I buy no garland for my head; nevertheless, since I do buy flowers, how doth it concern you in what manner I use them? I use them, as I think, more agreeably when free and loose."

At the close of his *Apology*, Tertullian vindicates the doctrines of the resurrection of the body and eternal judgment, concluding with confident words of triumph in spite of all persecution. "Ye cast statues, and inscribe titles on images to continue for ever. As far as ye can by means of monuments, ye yourselves in some sort grant a resurrection to the dead, while he who hopes for the true resurrection from God, if he suffer for God, is mad. Go on, ye righteous rulers—much more righteous in the eyes of the people, if ye sacrifice the Christians to them—rack, torment, condemn, grind us to powder. For your injustice is the proof of our innocence: it is for this that God permitteth us to suffer these things. When you lately condemned Christian women to dishonour rather than to death, you confessed that dishonour is accounted among us worse than death. Nor does your cruelty profit you, though each act be more refined than the last. It is rather the allure-ment to our sect. We grow up in greater number as often as we are cut down by you. The blood of the Christians is seed. Many among yourselves

exhort men to endure pain and death, and yet their words do not gain so many disciples as the Christians do in teaching by their acts. That very obstinacy, with which you upbraid us, is your teacher. Who is not stirred up by the contemplation of it to inquire what there is in the core of the matter? Who, when he hath inquired, doth not join us? Who, when he hath joined us, doth not desire to suffer, that he may purchase the whole grace of God? . . . Therefore it is that we, at the same time that we are judged, thank you for your judgment. Such enmity there is between the things of God and the things of man, when we are condemned by you, we are absolved by God."

It may be observed that Tertullian's defence of Christianity leaves untouched some points of doctrine, which would have a prominent place in a modern treatise. His silence on the subject of the sacraments is to be explained by the view in which they were regarded by the Early Church, as mysteries, not to be divulged to profane ears. In his treatise against the Gnostic Marcion, however, he refers to Baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> The vagueness with which he speaks of the Holy Spirit is probably not unconnected with the errors into which he subsequently fell. Concerning the organization of the Church, it was foreign to his subject to give particulars; but in other writings he refers to the existence of a threefold ministry—bishops,

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<sup>1</sup> Blunt, *On the Right Use of the Early Fathers*, p. 105.

presbyters, and deacons<sup>1</sup>—not as a question in dispute, but as a matter of fact.

It is also to be observed that Tertullian introduces arguments which are no longer maintained, as to the power of exorcism, and as to the absolving virtue of martyrdom. On the former of these two points it is convenient here to offer some remarks; the latter will be copiously illustrated in the subsequent history of the Church.

Exorcism, or the power of casting out evil spirits in the name of Christ, was conferred by Him on the twelve Apostles,<sup>2</sup> and afterwards on the seventy disciples,<sup>3</sup> who reported with joy that the evil spirits were subject to them. It was used by St. Paul in a memorable instance at Philippi,<sup>4</sup> and in other cases at Ephesus, which are not particularly related, but which provoked the rash emulation of the sons of Sceva.<sup>5</sup> The same power, according to Tertullian, was common among members of the Church in his day. He refers to it, not as a rare phenomenon, to be ascertained with difficulty from the evidence of others, but as a power to which he could appeal confidently, in proof of the Christian religion. He does not ask his pagan adversaries to believe that such a gift

<sup>1</sup> “In Tertullian there are at least three passages which bear testimony to the ministry as threefold, viz. in *De Baptismo*, cap. xvii. vol. i. p. 1218; in *De Fugâ in Persecutione*, cap. xi. vol. ii. p. 113; and in *De Monogamiâ*, cap. xi. vol. ii. p. 493.”—Wordsworth, *Outlines of the Christian Ministry*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. x. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvi.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke x. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xix.



continued to exist in the Church, but to believe the doctrine of the Church when the evidence of the gift was produced. In his time there was no disposition to doubt the reality of miracles, as signs of supernatural power. It was supposed that demons could work miracles, but that the act of casting out demons was a sure sign of power given by the true God.

To ignore the phenomena of exorcism in the early history of the Church is impossible. On the other hand, to recognize these phenomena is to open a larger question, that of miracles in general. The historians of the Early Church, including the Fathers who incidentally touch on contemporary events, relate a large number of occurrences which cannot be reconciled with the normal order of the world, and must in a popular sense be termed miraculous. Whether such occurrences infringed upon the order of nature as understood in our day, or only upon the order of nature as understood then, cannot be ascertained. In the older and larger sense of the word "miracle," it includes all such coincidences as might seem to indicate a special Providence. A timely shower of rain in answer to prayer is, in the ecclesiastical sense, a miracle. But the more modern use of the word "miracle" restricts it to phenomena which more clearly imply some interposition with the uniform government and course of the world.

In this narrower sense it is asserted by unbelievers that miracles cannot be true, because the



laws of nature are invariable. Here two assumptions are made at once : (1.) That the laws of nature are invariable. (2.) That we know exactly what the laws of nature are. There is much evidence in favour of the former of these two assumptions ; there is still more evidence against the latter ; but if either assumption be incorrect, the dogmatic rejection of miracles falls to the ground. A reasonable opinion on the subject seems to be that the ordinary course of nature is uniform and constant ; so that when we meet with a narrative in which the events are inconsistent with the order of things which we observe now, we should suspend our belief until we can test the alleged facts by inquiring, whether they are corroborated by several witnesses ; whether the witnesses show by their style and method of writing a careful veracious disposition ; and whether there be, in the nature of the case, any apparent cause to account for a deviation from the common order of nature. In the miracles which are recorded by the Evangelists, these tests are sufficient to overrule any doubt which their particulars might otherwise suggest. The harmony of the four several Gospels, the sober truthfulness which distinguishes their style, and, above all, the greatness of the occasion, combine to establish their credibility. If the same tests are applied to the miracles which are related by ecclesiastical historians, they are found to require sifting. They are seldom related by eye-witnesses ; they are seldom confirmed by independent testimony of

several persons ; they are seldom told with such simplicity and sobriety as gives internal evidence of truth ; they are often of an insignificant and frivolous character, bearing the stamp of improbability even to the minds of those who are without any prejudice against miracles in the abstract. Nevertheless, there remain some, after all tests are applied, which, if they cannot be safely accepted as historical, can as little be rejected as fictitious. The sceptical temper which absolutely denies all miracles would, in another stage of human knowledge, disbelieve eclipses, volcanoes, earthquakes, and water-spouts, and reject the testimony of mariners in the Southern seas, who describe the sun as moving from right to left. In considering the spiritual phenomena, whether exorcisms, visions, or other miraculous incidents, which come before us in the history of the Early Church, we learn from modern science to use more severe tests of veracity and accuracy ; but we do not learn to set limits to the Divine omnipotence.

Exorcism differs from other miraculous signs, inasmuch as its effect is on the mind, rather than on the body. The symptoms of demoniacal possession are those of mania, to which the inhabitants of Africa are very subject, especially in the summer, when the sirocco blows. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the laws of mental disorder to determine how far the power of exorcism overrules those laws ; but the action of mind on mind, and of will on will, in the case of the insane, is at all

times wonderful. Moreover, it has often been found that a great religious or political crisis develops an abnormal energy and vitality of the soul, an enthusiasm for good or for evil, which appears strange if measured by the experience of ordinary times ; and never was there greater cause for such prodigies than in the conflict between Christianity and paganism, when "the strong man armed" of the parable was exerting all his force to repel the invader who was stronger than he.

The rulers of Carthage were prompt in taking up Tertullian's defiant challenge to do their worst. Authorized by the Emperor Septimius Severus to restrain the progress of conversions to Christianity, they went beyond their instructions, and endeavoured to stamp out the new religion.<sup>1</sup> This emperor was a native of Leptis, one of the tributary cities of Carthage in former times. He had been favourably disposed to the Christians at the beginning of his reign ; for he believed his recovery from a dangerous illness to be due to the holy oil with which a Christian slave had anointed him. The education of his sons was placed in the hands of a Christian nurse and a Christian tutor. But the possession of imperial power made him impatient of the free spirit of Christianity. Having overthrown his two rivals, Niger and Albinus, he became undisputed master of the world, and his policy was directed, with unrelenting and unscrupulous deter-

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, v., xvi.

mination, to extinguish every spark of liberty which was left in the Roman Empire. His persecution of the Christians was dictated by a mixture of superstition and of despotism. He feared that the progress of Christianity was displeasing to the gods of Rome; and he hated it as an affront to his pride as an absolute sovereign. Severus was no doubt exasperated by an incident which took place in the East, but which was carried by report over the world, and made a profound impression. On the occasion of his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, being raised to the imperial titles of Augustus and Cæsar, a donative was given to the soldiers, who came to receive it wearing laurel crowns. One of them was conspicuous among the rest, his head bare, his crown in his hand. Being asked the reason, he said, "I am a Christian."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in the year 200, twelve Christians of Scillita, in Byzacena, of whom Speratus was the foremost, were put to death at Carthage for refusing to worship the emperor and swear by his genius. "I acknowledge the emperor as my ruler," Speratus said, "but can worship none but my Lord, the King of kings."

The edict of Severus in A.D. 202, by which his subjects were forbidden to embrace Christianity, was followed up by a sharp persecution of the Christians in Africa.<sup>2</sup> The narrative which is given in the *Acts of the Martyrdom of St. Perpetua* is said to have been partly written by herself, and

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *De Corona*.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, i. 65; Neander, i. 170; Morcelli.

is full of incidental touches which bear witness to its authenticity and throw light on the condition of the African Church. Perpetua was one of those who came under the edict of Severus, for she was a catechumen, preparing for Baptism, and had therefore not yet made a formal profession of the Christian faith. She was a young matron of noble family, only twenty-two years of age, and had an infant at the breast when she was apprehended and committed to prison. Her father, a heathen, expostulated with her passionately, imploring her, for her own sake and for his, to deny that she was a Christian. She pointed to a vase which stood near, and asked, "Can I call that anything but what it is?" "No," he said. "Neither can I call myself anything but what I am, that is, a Christian." In his fury, her father was about to strike her, but refrained, and left her for a time.

A few days afterwards she was baptized with four companions, praying for grace to endure the torments which she had reason to expect. They were all thrown together into a dark prison, crowded with a promiscuous mass of criminals, and almost intolerable from the heat. Perpetua suffered much from the rudeness of the soldiers who kept guard over them; but her chief distress was for her infant, from whom she was separated. Two deacons, who used to visit the Christian prisoners, brought to them the consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper, and procured for Perpetua another room, by giving money to the gaolers. There her mother

and brother visited her, and brought her child, with whom she forgot all care, and felt herself perfectly happy. "The prison," she says, "became all at once like a palace, and I would rather have been there than anywhere else."

Her brother, who was also a catechumen, suggested that she should pray for a vision to reveal to her what was to follow. She prayed accordingly, and her prayer was apparently answered by a dream, in which she saw a narrow ladder of gold set up from earth to heaven, guarded by a dragon at the foot, and hedged in at the sides by swords, lances, and hooks. A Christian, whom she knew and revered, Satorus, began to mount the ladder, and she followed, treading on the dragon's head as she stepped upon the first round. At the top she found herself in a meadow, where a shepherd was with his flock, surrounded by figures robed in white. He gave to her a morsel of food, which she received with hands joined together, and the white-robed company said "Amen;" at which she woke, with a taste of sweetness still in her mouth.

The father of Perpetua visited her again before her trial, and used every means which his grief could devise to shake her resolution: throwing himself on the ground at her feet; kissing her hands; calling her "Lady," as if a title of reverence could move her; and imploring her to retract her confession, for the love which he bore her, and for her baby's sake. She was deeply affected, but only said that all was in God's hands.

When Perpetua was brought to trial, she saw before her, in the court, her distracted father holding up the infant in his arms. The judge himself bade her think of her child, and of her father's grey hairs; but at last, weary of entreaty, he sternly commanded her to offer sacrifice to the gods. Her father persisted in his clamorous appeal, until the judge, growing impatient, ordered him to be removed and beaten with rods. Perpetua heard the blows, and felt them, she said, as if inflicted upon herself. But when sentence was given that she and her companions were to be thrown to the wild beasts, the joyful expectation of martyrdom swallowed up all other feelings.

Before the day arrived, Perpetua saw her father once more, but not her child, whom he refused to give back to her. She also had other visions, one of which is memorable, as giving an early example of the ideas which afterwards took shape in the doctrine of purgatory. She was praying, and the name of her little brother Dinocrates, who had died some time before, rose to her lips spontaneously. It was a sign, she thought, of God's will, that she should pray for him; and as she prayed, his figure appeared before her, as if emerging out of a dark place, pale, disfigured by sores, thirsty, and unable to reach some water which was in sight. Still she continued to pray for him, and her vision grew brighter, until the darkness passed away, and the child's face became healthy and cheerful. He took and drank the water, and went off to play; and



then Perpetua felt that he was delivered from punishment.

Among her fellow-prisoners was a slave woman, named Felicitas, who feared that she might be kept back from suffering with the rest by her expected child-birth. They all prayed for her, and her child was born three days before the young emperor's birthday, which had been fixed for their martyrdom. As she cried out in her pain, the gaoler said, "What will you do when you are exposed to the beasts?" "There will be One with me then," she said, "to suffer for me, because I too shall suffer for Him." The gaoler himself was afterwards converted.

It was customary for prisoners to be entertained with a public feast on the day before their execution; and this was observed by the Christians as an agape. The people crowded to see them, and one of the martyrs, Saturnius, said, "Mark our faces well, that you may recognize us at the day of judgment."

They came into the amphitheatre with joy on their countenances at the near approach of martyrdom. Their persecutors attempted to robe them in scarlet and yellow dresses, according to a custom which was probably derived from the human sacrifices of the ancient Phœnician religion. But they protested that they were suffering in order to be free from such heathen rites, and the objection was allowed. When the wild beasts were let loose upon them, Perpetua, who had been singing psalms, was tossed by a wild cow. She seemed to be in



a trance, and on recovering her consciousness, instinctively drew her torn tunic round her, and inquired when the beasts would come? The mangled victims, who were still alive, were about to be drawn away to be put to death privately; but the blood-thirsty spectators demanded to see them killed. They took leave of each other with the kiss of peace, and awaited their death-blow calmly. Perpetua was put in the hands of a young gladiator, who, from unskilfulness or agitation, could not despatch her, until she herself guided his sword with her own hand.

A narrative like this speaks for itself. It is no wonder that the edict of Severus was foiled by the example of such martyrs as Perpetua. The impression made by Tertullian's eloquence and satire, however deep it might be, was transient compared with the enthusiasm inspired by the spectacle of a noble lady, young, wealthy, endowed with all that makes life precious, and gladly sacrificing all for Christ. Nor is it strange that, in the universal sympathy of the Church, the dreams of Perpetua should have been regarded as revelations, and the narrative of her martyrdom treated almost as canonical Scripture.<sup>1</sup> A calmer judgment, in a calmer age, was required to discriminate between the slight dogmatic value of the visions of a neophyte, and the moral grandeur of so illustrious a martyr.

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine thought it necessary to argue that the *Acts of Perpetua* were not canonical.—Robertson, i. 68.



### CHAPTER III.

#### TERTULLIAN AND THE EARLY HERESIES.

TERTULLIAN has not only set before us in his *Apology* a vivid picture of the Christian society in Africa, but has, in his other writings, contributed largely to our knowledge of the various questions of doctrine, which agitated the African Church in common with the rest of Christendom. Communication was frequent between the different parts of the Christian world. Means were found, in spite of persecution, to maintain ecclesiastical unity by mutual intercourse and conference. New speculations which sprang up in the fertile soil of Asia Minor were soon debated eagerly in places as remote as Carthage or Lyons. It is evident that Tertullian's *Apology* was written for a much more extensive circle of readers than the rulers and people of the province of Africa; and the doctrinal controversies, which in the second century began to be numerous, soon spread from place to place.

As yet the faith of the universal Church was not settled by any formal definition. No General

Council met until more than a century after the time in which Tertullian wrote; and it was still later before the Nicene Creed in its complete form was composed. How soon the several Books of the New Testament were collected in one volume is doubtful. Tertullian himself is the first to use the words "New Testament" of the Books of the Apostles and Evangelists. In the absence of any recognized standard of Christian doctrine, the great body of Christians relied much on the authority of individual teachers: such men as Irenæus, who had known Polycarp, who had known St. John. The Church was feeling its way tentatively to a definite rule of faith, through study and controversy. Although the Christians, in Africa as elsewhere, held by the same Scriptures, the same sacraments, the same Apostolic ministry as afterwards, the boundary lines between orthodoxy and heterodoxy had not yet been traced so clearly as to show what was Catholic doctrine and what was heretical. The collective voice of the Church had not spoken on some of the momentous questions which were asked, when the Gospel was preached to the nations of the world. It came to minds which were preoccupied with ideas drawn from tradition or philosophy; and in receiving its message they often interpreted it according to their preconceptions.

Many an active and subtle intellect went astray at the first step. The vast field opened out by the disclosure to the heathen world of the mysteries of creation, redemption, and sanctification, as revealed

in the Old and New Testaments, seemed to invite further exploration; and the philosophical minds of Alexandria and other cities, eagerly thirsting for new truth, entered upon those mysteries with a recklessness like that of discoverers landing upon untrodden soil, where all the vegetation is new and strange. The doctrine of creation, as declared in the first chapter of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," suggested to inquirers, especially those of the school of Philo, a variety of baseless speculations, evolved chiefly out of their own imaginative brains. Against the ablest of this school, Valentinus, Tertullian wrote a special treatise. A more legitimate and fruitful subject of inquiry was the relation of the Father to the Son and the Holy Spirit. On this profound subject, concerning which it was impossible for Christian teachers to be silent or indifferent, theory after theory arose in the East and spread to the West. It was the lot of Tertullian, the master-mind of his age, to appear as the successful adversary of two important heretical teachers, Marcion and Praxeas, and to be himself taken captive by a third, Montanus.<sup>1</sup>

Marcion, a native of Sinope, and the son of a bishop, is reckoned among the Gnostics; but he differs from other Gnostics in the general character of his mind, which was comparatively sober, practical, and religious, averse from fantastic theories,

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 58; Neander, ii. 136.

and inclined, even to a fault, towards a rational view of Christian doctrine. He led an ascetic life, and appears to have been blameless in his moral character, though he did not escape the imputations which were too common in ancient controversy. The great problem which exercised the mind of Marcion was how to reconcile the Old Testament with the New, and both with the facts of nature. God, as manifested in nature, as revealed in the Old Testament, and as revealed in the New Testament, could not, in his opinion, be one and the same God. He therefore proposed the explanation that there were three first principles : first, the Supreme God, a Being perfectly good, the Father of Jesus Christ ; secondly, a subordinate deity, whom he called the Demiurge, the author of the visible universe, and God of the Old Testament ; and thirdly, an evil spirit, the lord of matter. This idea he elaborated in detail, endeavouring to force the Scriptures for confirmation. Passages which were unfavourable he rejected as spurious ; and thus he occupies a notable position in ecclesiastical history, as foremost of the rationalist school of critics, who so far recognize the authority of Scripture as to appeal to its testimony, while subjecting it to the criterion of their private judgment.

The controversy with Marcion opened the question of the canon of Holy Scripture, and more especially of the New Testament. He acknowledged none of the Books of the Bible as canonical, except the Gospel of St. Luke, and ten of St.

Paul's Epistles. Nor did he accept these in the form in which they stood, maintaining that they had been corrupted by Judaism. His criticism, based as it is on theory, is an indirect testimony of considerable value to the early acceptance of the Books of the New Testament.

Nothing in the history of the Early Church is more obscure in its details than the gradual formation of the Books of the New Testament into one volume, and their reception as the inspired Word of God. Considering the circumstances under which these books were written, addressed for the most part to particular Churches or persons, as letters, it is wonderful how soon they became the common property of the whole Church, notwithstanding the many difficulties involved in transcription and circulation; and how soon the canon was settled with a few exceptions. It was necessarily a work of time.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's injunction to the Colossians that his Epistle to them should be read by the Church of Laodicea, and that they in turn should read his Epistle to the Laodiceans,

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<sup>1</sup> "The history of the New Testament canon may be conveniently divided into three periods. The first extends to the time of Hegeppus (circa A.D. 170), and includes the era of the separate circulation and gradual collection of the Apostolic writings. The second is closed by the persecution of Diocletian (A.D. 303), and marks the separation of the sacred writings from the remaining ecclesiastical literature. The third may be defined by the third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), in which a catalogue of the Books of Scripture was formally ratified by conciliar authority."—Westcott, in *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Canon."

could easily be followed at places which were in the same neighbourhood. But some time might well elapse before the Epistle of the Romans was read in Galatia, and the Epistle to the Galatians at Rome. It would probably be much longer before the Epistles to the Corinthians, to Timothy at Ephesus, and to Titus in Crete—letters full of special instructions and local allusions, were claimed by the Church at large as profitable “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, bear the appearance of having been written apart from each other, without any intention at the time of writing that they should be read in combination. To bring together the four Gospels, together with the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, St. Jude, and St. John; to transcribe them in the cumbrous form of writing in capitals which early manuscripts show; to diffuse numerous copies over the whole of the known world, from the shores of the Euxine and the banks of the Nile to Gaul and Numidia,—all this was a work involving extraordinary patience and industry. Yet this was done so early, that we find Marcion, in the middle of the second century, criticizing the New Testament in the spirit of a modern sceptic, who implies by his very strictures the established authority of that which he impugns.

The references to Holy Scripture, in the few extant writings of the period immediately suc-



ceeding the Apostles, are incidental and brief; but in Tertullian's age, at the close of the second century, there is abundant evidence that the Scriptures of the New Testament had been disseminated among all the Churches. Irenæus at Lyons, Clement at Alexandria, contemporaries of Tertullian, agree with each other in vindicating the authority of these Books as we have them. Of the twenty-seven Books which compose the New Testament, twenty are known to have been generally received. Those concerning which the judgment of the Church was undecided as yet, were the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of St. James, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Second and Third of St. John, the Epistle of St. Jude, and the Apocalypse. There were also three other books which were sometimes quoted, but were eventually excluded from the canon: the Epistles of Barnabas and Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Tertullian speaks of Marcion "affecting to innovate as to the number of the Epistles": a phrase which shows that the number was already ascertained.<sup>1</sup>

Marcion died soon after the birth of Tertullian, but his opinions were held by a sect which endured long afterwards, renounced by Christians as heretical, and at the same time persecuted as Christian by the heathen world.

Another Asiatic, Praxeas, against whom Tertullian wrote, was a contemporary of Tertullian, and

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, v. 21; Blunt, p. 433.



came into personal communication with him, probably both at Rome and at Carthage. He had gained some reputation as a confessor of the faith in persecution, and as an opponent of the extravagance of the Montanists in his own country. He was author of a doctrine concerning the divine nature which was afterwards developed by Noetus and Sabellius, and was finally known as Sabellianism.

It was inevitable that some perplexity should arise in the minds of new converts as to the relation of God the Father to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The two opposite errors which are described and condemned under the terms, "confounding the Persons," and "dividing the Substance," are the directions in which inquiring minds were most apt to deviate from the truth, until a straight course was clearly defined between them. But these errors, natural and almost inevitable as they were at the outset, carried their own warning in the consequences to which they led. A false step in doctrine or speculation was like a false step in a morass, which at once suggests caution to the traveller by the insecure footing which it yields; and those who persisted in striking out a path of their own in the dark, were not victims of accident so much as of rash self-confidence. The early heresies, originating in conjectural theory, or in one-sided interpretation of Scripture, were refuted by fuller study of the Scriptures, and by controversy, which unfolded the deeper principles

involved in conflicting doctrines, and also disclosed remoter tendencies which were not obvious at first.

The doctrine affirmed by Praxeas and his followers was that the Son of God was a manifestation, and only a manifestation, of the Father. He based this doctrine on the principle of the essential unity of the Godhead, and used the term "Monarchian" to describe the views of those who held with him. But they were called by their adversaries "Patri-passians;" and this term was of itself sufficient to indicate the perilous direction of the doctrine of Praxeas, which seemed to involve the consequence that God the Father suffered on the cross. Praxeas was led by the arguments of Tertullian to retract or modify his opinions. They were, however, revived not long afterwards by Sabellius, a native of the Libyan Pentapolis, the neighbourhood of Cyrene, in a more subtle and philosophical form.

Asia Minor produced in the same period a third heretical teacher, Montanus, whose doctrine found a congenial soil in Africa, and exercised a profound influence on the whole Western Church. While the errors of Marcion and of Praxeas had reference to the nature of the Father and the Son, those of Montanus related to the Holy Spirit. Montanus was a man of weak intellect, but of intense enthusiasm. He was a native of Phrygia, a country which was notorious in the ancient world as the principal seat of the worship of the goddess Cybele.

The citizens of Rome, not easily moved to wonder or disgust, were amazed at the frantic orgies with which the priests of Cybele celebrated the rites of their goddess, the shrieks and yells, the din of horns and drums and cymbals, the delirious dances, and shameless indecency. To this gross excitement Montanus opposed a purer excitement—the enthusiasm of a self-devoted, ascetic spirit, renouncing the world and its pleasures, eager for the glory of martyrdom, and sustained by consciousness of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

At first, before the Montanist doctrines were fully known or fully developed, they were favourably received. The martyrs of Lyons sent a letter by Irenæus to the Bishop of Rome, Eleutherius, in A.D. 177, expressing their belief in the prophetic gifts of Montanus.<sup>1</sup> The Church of Rome was on the point of recognizing the Montanists, when Praxeas, arriving from Asia, gave fuller information concerning the sect. Montanus was said to claim to be the Paraclete whom Christ had promised. He was accompanied by two prophetesses, one of whom, Maximilla, declared that no prophetess would rise up after her, but that the end of all things would immediately come. Other prophetesses, however, arose, some of whom fell into trances, in which they foretold future events, and prescribed cures for diseases.

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, V. iii.

A saying of Montanus, which was supposed to express his idea of inspiration, was to the effect that the Spirit moved the mind as when a musician plays upon a lyre. He seems to have held that inspired persons were merely passive instruments of the Holy Spirit, seeing visions and uttering oracles in a state of ecstasy.

The Montanists forbade military service, the business and the pleasures of secular life, the study of profane learning. They enjoined severe rules of fasting and discipline, encouraged their followers to invite persecution, and taught that martyrdom was to be desired as a sure way of salvation. They divided the Christians into two classes : those who were merely carnal, and those whom they termed spiritual, who belonged to their party. The result of a careful inquiry was that the Montanists were condemned and excommunicated. In this respect other Churches followed the example of Rome.

Nevertheless, the Montanists continued to exist as a party, and their opinions were deeply infused into the African Church. There are signs in Tertullian's *Apology* of his sympathy in the exaggerated ideas of the virtue of martyrdom which were characteristic of Montanism ; and the story of Perpetua indicates a similar disposition. In fact, the essence of Montanism consisted not so much in any dogmatic tenets as in a fervid religious emotion. The clergy of Rome had already begun to be distinguished for the practical wisdom which was a tradition of the imperial city. They saw the unruly

tendencies of the Montanist claims to private inspiration, and disapproved of them. On the other hand, the more impulsive and fiery Christians of Africa were attracted to Montanism. When Tertullian was at Rome, he found himself at variance with the Roman clergy on this subject, and the result was a permanent alienation. This is probably the true account of what Jerome describes as a mere personal quarrel: "After remaining a presbyter of the Church until he had attained the middle age of life, Tertullian was, by the envy and contumacious treatment of the Roman clergy, driven to embrace the opinions of Montanus, which he has mentioned in several of his works under the title of the 'New Prophecy.'"<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian had formerly written, with his usual force of language, against heresy and heretics, pointing out that truth was one, heresy manifold; that truth was to be recognized by the consent of all the Churches, whereas heresy was local and limited to a party; that truth was derived from the Apostles, whereas heresy was modern; that truth was confirmed by Holy Scripture, whereas heresy set itself against and above Holy Scripture.<sup>2</sup> He now found himself, by these tests, in the position of a heretic, upholding a new alleged revelation against the general authority of the Church. Yet it was not his wish to separate from the communion of the Christian Church, nor was it the wish of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome, quoted by Pusey, *Preface to Tertullian*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*.

Church to exclude him from fellowship. He held with his whole heart the principles of the Christian faith, and differed from his fellow-Churchmen only in thinking their standard of holiness too low.

They, on their part, could not but appreciate the value of his earnest and brilliant advocacy. So the position which Tertullian holds in the history of the Church is peculiar, almost revered as a saint and Father of the Church, almost stigmatized as heretical. The greatest of the Bishops of Carthage, Cyprian, who belonged to the next generation, used habitually to speak of Tertullian with profound respect. He never passed a day without reading a portion of his works, and when he asked his secretary for the book, his custom was to say, "Give me the master."

Tertullian, in his *Apology*, takes less notice than might be expected of the spiritual gifts of the Apostles, probably because he was inclined to put too much confidence in the gifts of Montanus and others nearer his own time. His treatise on heresy is more explicit in its recognition of the inspiration and authority of the Apostles.

The Montanism of Tertullian showed itself in a Puritan severity of morals, which led him to write against heathen shows, to denounce second marriages as adulterous, and to extol the virtue of celibacy. A painter named Hermogenes, who had married a second wife, and who, although a Christian, painted heathen subjects, was attacked by Tertullian in a special treatise. He also wrote

two treatises, *On Flight in Persecution* and *Scorpice*, in which he defended, against the Church and against the Gnostics, his exaggerated views of the benefits of martyrdom. Another feature of his doctrine was the immediate expectation of the end of the world, and the commencement of the Millennium.

In character, Tertullian has much in common with the leaders of great religious movements in other ages. By his intellectual power and ascetic fervour he may in some respects be compared with St. Bernard ; but his reliance on the prophetic gifts of individuals has more affinity with such Protestants as Edward Irving. At a later period, when the discipline of the Church was more fully organized, his genuine zeal might have been brought into harmony with her government. As it was, he was of too commanding an intellect to submit to authority, and he left behind him a sect of Tertullianists who were an element of discord to the African Church.

For modern students of ecclesiastical history, the works of Tertullian have a special value as a mine of information on the usages of his contemporaries. They exhibit the germs of many sentiments and practices which, in the course of time, were developed or passed away, but which are found afterwards to have advanced or receded from the particular stage in which he shows them.<sup>1</sup> Such,

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<sup>1</sup> See Blunt, *Use of the Fathers*, p. 103, and references.



for instance, are the frequent use of the sign of the cross as a symbol of Christian faith, accompanied by an indignant disclaimer of the worship of the cross : prayers and offerings for the dead, especially in honour of the martyrs upon the anniversaries of their martyrdom : vicarious baptism for the dead : unwritten tradition adduced in confirmation of Holy Scripture : martyrs in prison interceding for absolution of persons under censure : the infallibility of the Universal Church asserted : a time of purgation between death and judgment suggested : the Church of Rome extolled as possessing authentic copies of the letters of the Apostles, if not the very originals ; as the scene of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the miraculous deliverance of St. John. In these and similar cases, the writings of Tertullian prove much, both by what they say, and by what they leave unsaid. While they show the early rise of notions which grew into Romanism, these notions appear mostly in a crude, immature, and speculative stage, which disproves the theory which would ascribe them to Apostolic tradition.

In other places Tertullian expresses himself in a manner opposed to the doctrine of transubstantiation ; to the supremacy of St. Peter, whom he defends against disparagement as being not inferior to St. Paul. He denounces the worship of angels as a doctrine of Simon Magus. He speaks of the Virgin Mary without any mark of special reverence : he recognizes no sacraments beside Bap-



tism and the Lord's Supper: he denies the necessity of celibacy for the clergy, though favourable to celibacy, voluntarily undertaken, both for clergy and laity.

It is necessary to discriminate between Tertullian's own opinions and his testimony to the prevalent opinion of his time; and this discrimination is made more difficult by the peculiarities of his style, his affected language, and his inordinate use of irony.<sup>1</sup> Yet, with all that can be said to qualify the value of his works, they remain a treasure to Christendom. There is scarcely any one writer since the Apostles whose works are so important for the right understanding of the life of the Early Church; for the light which he sheds is the more precious by reason of the surrounding obscurity.

Tertullian bears witness to the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest from worldly business, and of solemn rejoicing. The whole season from Easter to Whitsuntide was kept as a festival, and the distinction was marked by standing instead of kneeling at prayers. Churches were built for worship, notwithstanding the dangers of the time, and a portion was railed off, containing the Lord's Table, to which Tertullian gives the name of altar.<sup>2</sup> The celebration of the Eucharist was daily, and early in the morning. Portions of the consecrated bread were carried home for those who were unable to attend. The Eucharistic service was divided in

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<sup>1</sup> Blunt, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Bingham, VIII. vi. 12.

two parts, one of which was open to catechumens and others, only communicants being allowed to be present at the celebration of the mysteries. Catechumens underwent two or three years' probation before Baptism, which was followed immediately by the laying on of hands, or Confirmation.

Tertullian himself argues against the necessity of Infant Baptism, in a manner which indicates that it was customary. Easter and Pentecost were the chief seasons for Baptism, but Tertullian urges the fitness of any time whatever. "Every day is the Lord's ; if there be a difference as to solemnity, there is none as to grace."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Robertson, i. 162, etc., and references.





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DECIAN PERSECUTION.

THE persecution of the Christians under Severus, cruel as it was, was limited in its object, which was, not to interfere with those who were already members of the Church, but to stop the progress of Christianity by striking terror into new converts. After the death of Severus in A.D. 211, a period of thirty-eight years followed, during which the Christians in Africa were comparatively unmolested. It is not, however, to be supposed that the cessation of judicial acts of persecution left them altogether at peace. They were far more obnoxious to the people than to the Government, and their unpopularity, which was openly displayed when the martyrs were sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts, was likely to find means of annoyance at other times also. Christianity was aggressive, and made enemies, disturbing many prejudices and many class interests. The priests of the heathen gods would not fail to resent the contumely thrown upon their religion, and the diminished number of their wor-

shippers. The makers of images, and other traders who lived by heathen rites, would denounce the sacrilegious interference with their trade, after the manner of the Ephesian Demetrius.<sup>1</sup> With similar feelings, hardly less intense, the purveyors of fashionable luxuries and entertainments, the makers of garlands and jewellery, the musicians and dancers, the whole theatrical profession, the athletes and the gladiators, looked with an evil eye on the Christians who would give them no countenance. The Montanists, by the provocation which they delighted to give, drew down odium upon the whole Christian body. Such incidents as that of the soldier who refused to wear a wreath, led the army to look upon Christianity as a religion subversive of military discipline. The magistrates were no less jealous of the Christians, as a secret society disposed to rebel against the laws. In this state of popular feeling, any serious calamity was easily imputed to the wrath of the offended gods against the Christians who despised them. If the rich harvest of Africa failed for want of seasonable rain, or was blighted by a plague of locusts, the priests were ready to affirm, and the people to believe, that it was a divine judgment on the land, for tolerating a sect which refused to do sacrifice to the ancient gods of Carthage.

Nevertheless, the Church made rapid progress during the fifty years which followed the publica-

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 24-28.

tion of Tertullian's *Apology*. The forces in its favour were more than a match for those which were arrayed on the opposite side. Convinced of the truth of Christianity and the falsehood of paganism, the Christians felt a certain assurance of victory, whereas the heathens had no similar confidence in their own religion. Its absurdity and moral corruption made them ashamed, even while they clung to it for the sake of old association. The weapons of calumny, which were used so freely against the Christians and their worship, fell pointless when the spectacle of public martyrdom showed to all the world what sort of faith it was which the Christians held. Paganism could inspire no such fortitude; still less could it inspire the hope of salvation in which the martyrs died, or the loving fellowship which bound together the whole Christian society, overcoming the distinctions of rank and culture and race. At the imperial court the name of Christ began to be held in reverence. His image was placed by Alexander Severus in his oratory, among the images of gods and notable men. The Emperors Gordian and Philip were also friendly to the Christians. The latter emperor was said to have been admitted into the Christian Church at Antioch, after submitting to penance.<sup>1</sup> It is certain that he protected the Christians, and that he showed favour in particular to Origen, the greatest theologian of the Alexandrine Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, vi. 34; Robertson, i. 96.

Origen wrote letters to Philip, and also to his wife and mother.

A great change took place with the accession of the Emperor Decius, in A.D. 249. Decius, who inherited the name of one of the most celebrated families of ancient Rome, a name eminent for patriotic self-devotion, was ambitious to rekindle the expiring flame of Roman nationality. This ambition was stimulated by the celebration, in the previous year, of the thousandth anniversary of the building of Rome. Comparing the present with the past, Decius observed and lamented the decline in public virtue, which he endeavoured to arrest by reviving the ancient office of censor. The same spirit of antiquarian revival made him take a more decided part than any of his predecessors as the patron of the old religion. He issued edicts for the suppression of Christianity, which led to a more general and rigorous persecution than had been suffered under any of his predecessors.

The Church of Carthage had at this time for bishop a man who was in all respects well qualified to preside over the Christians in Africa at such a crisis. Cyprian, by which name Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus is familiarly known, is one of the most universally and justly famous characters in ecclesiastical history. Placed in a position of singular difficulty, and called to decide many questions previously untried, he set an example which has been in its general outline, if not in details, a model to bishops.

He was born about the year 200, and was trained as a rhetorician, a profession which implied considerable culture, literary and oratorical, and conferred a high social position upon its leading members. The earlier writings of Cyprian are marked by a florid and redundant eloquence, which he afterwards subdued to a style which is admirable for its earnest dignity. At the time of his conversion, in 246, he was in affluent circumstances, but he sold his villa and gardens at his baptism, and gave the price to the poor.<sup>1</sup> It appears that they were bought by friends and subsequently restored to him. He took the name Cæcilius as a baptismal name, from a presbyter who had been instrumental to his conversion. His virtues and abilities were so conspicuous that he was raised to the episcopate by popular acclamation in the year 248. There were, however, five presbyters who opposed his hasty elevation, and bore a lasting grudge to Cyprian on this account. He rose at once to the responsibilities of his office, which required, in an extraordinary degree, the combination of zeal with discretion, of high Christian principle with sound practical wisdom, and that highest order of courage which consists in bearing unjust imputations for the welfare of others.

The relaxed state of discipline and morals in the Church, during the long period of repose, was the first subject to which his attention was given.

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<sup>1</sup> Pontius, cap. 15.



Faith, he said, was in a slumbering state. Every one was applying himself to the increase of wealth. The Christians of Carthage, availing themselves of the special opportunities for commerce which their city enjoyed, were intent on money-making. They were falling in other respects into careless habits, and adopting heathen fashions. He speaks of women painting their faces and eyes, and dyeing their hair. Even bishops engaged in trade, and made voyages for profit. These things, as he afterwards told them, required the chastisement of persecution for correction.

“The earliest of his letters is a sharp censure, written in the name of his colleagues and himself, of those Christians who, at their death, appointed presbyters to be guardians or executors, contrary to a decree which had been made against the employment of the clergy in secular avocations. He does not deserve to be named at the altar of God in the prayer of the priests, who would call the priests and ministers away from the altar.” On this account, he forbids the prayers of the Church to be made for a certain Victor. “Since then Victor, contrary to the decree lately made by the priesthood in council, has dared to appoint Geminius Faustinus, a presbyter, his executor, it cannot be allowed that any oblation be made by you on his falling asleep, or any prayer offered in his name in the Church.”

At the same time, he had to deal with the presumptuous self-confidence of some members of the

Church, who, professing a high degree of spiritual grace, and having pledged themselves to a life of chastity, threw aside all decorum in their relations with the opposite sex. These he reproved with a firm yet kindly wisdom, pointing out the duty of avoiding the risk of temptation, and of forbearing to act in a manner which, even if innocent, was apt to give scandal to their brethren. Cyprian's reverence for Tertullian did not mislead him as to the self-deceit which besets extravagant claims to spirituality. There was in Tertullian a largeness and subtlety of intellect, a power of eloquence, which made him worthy to be regarded as a master; but in questions which required practical judgment Cyprian decided for himself more wisely.

The necessity of government in the Church was continually uppermost in Cyprian's mind. The Christian society had so far increased in his day, that the mere numbers were sufficient to demand rare administrative abilities; and the opposite extremes of worldliness and fanaticism, which were prevalent among the members, required the moderating influence of a mind like his, to which the principles of unity and order were paramount. Through him the episcopal office was developed more fully than it had been, or could have been, under the less favourable circumstances of former times. On this account he is sometimes regarded as an ambitious prelate.<sup>1</sup> Yet in truth he appears

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xvi.

to have been as free from ambition as from avarice. His care to act in harmony with the bishops of his own province, and the presbyters of his own diocese, was scrupulous. If he was tenacious of his own authority, it was from no vain or selfish love of power, but from a genuine desire to serve the Church over which he was called to preside, and from a consciousness of his ability to govern well.

The edict of Decius is not preserved.<sup>1</sup> It appears to have been a general citation of his subjects throughout the empire to present themselves in some public place in the several cities, and there offer sacrifice to the gods of Rome, on pain of death. In Africa, as in other parts of the empire, the suddenness and stringency of the edict excited a kind of panic among the Christians. Many of them recanted at once, and crowded to the citadel of Carthage, the ancient Byrsa, which, after Roman usage, had received the name of Capitol. Some, with ingenious casuistry, satisfied their conscience and the law by buying certificates from the magistrates, which might easily be had, in proof of their having sacrificed, although they had not really done so. But there was also a large number who firmly and gladly faced the alternative of martyrdom, and the prisons were soon filled with a crowd of men and women, who were made to experience, by rough usage and want of food and air, a foretaste of the tortures which were to follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 96.

A cry arose among the populace for Cyprian. The Bishop of Carthage was a well-known and conspicuous personage. He was the recognized head of the Christian community throughout Africa proper, Numidia, and Mauretania ; and the dignity of the office was enhanced by Cyprian's personal qualities. "Cyprian to the lions!" was the cry of the mob.<sup>1</sup> Patient and submissive as the Christians were usually under persecution, it was not likely that they would allow their bishop to be taken without resistance. A riot had already begun, when it was quieted by the disappearance of Cyprian from Carthage.

Both in his own day and since, his retirement to a place of safety has been severely criticized. There were not a few who would have preferred to see their bishop sharing the lot of the martyrs, even though the Church were left without a pastor, as was the case of the Church of Rome at this very time, for more than a year, through the martyrdom of Fabian. Cyprian showed, on a later occasion, his willingness to die for his faith.

His conduct on the outbreak of the Decian persecution was apparently dictated by a plain sense of duty, without fear of death, and equally without fear of the calumny which was sure to misinterpret his conduct. The letters which he wrote at this time show that, whether right or wrong in judgment, he acted with a deliberate calmness in which

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<sup>1</sup> Pontius, *Life*, 8.

he stood almost alone. On his departure he wrote as follows :—

“Cyprian to his presbyters and deacons, his dearest brethren, greeting,—By the mercy of God, dearest brethren, I address you in safety, glad that all things are well with regard to your safety also. And since the state of the city does not suffer me to be with you at present, I entreat you by your faith and religion that you will perform both your own and my duty there, that so nothing be wanting either as regards discipline or diligence. As to what concerns the supply of necessities, either of those who, having confessed the Lord with a glorious voice, have been cast into prison, or of those who labour under poverty and indigence, and still abide in the Lord, I entreat that nothing be wanting ; since the whole sum that was brought together was distributed amongst the clergy for such emergencies, that so several might have wherewithal to relieve the necessities and the pressure of individuals.”

He maintained a constant communication with them, exhorting them to be quiet and patient, and in particular to restrain the brethren from going in crowds to visit the imprisoned confessors. He advised moderation and caution in availing themselves of the leave which was given to the prisoners to see their friends, lest jealousy should be excited and access be denied altogether.

His own view on the subject of flight in persecution is expressed in a treatise which he wrote shortly afterwards. “The Lord commands us in

persecution to retire and escape, both teaching us to do thus, and Himself doing it. For as the crown is conferred at God's good pleasure, and can only be enjoyed when the hour comes for accepting it, the man who continuing in Christ withdraws himself for a season, is not a denier of the faith, but only awaits his time." Accordingly he wrote, a few years later, to his people: "Keep quiet; nor let any among you stir up any commotion, nor offer himself up to the heathen of his own accord. For his turn to speak is when he has been apprehended and delivered up, since in that hour the Lord, who is in us, will speak, and He would rather that we should confess than profess." <sup>1</sup>

But there was a numerous party at Carthage who had imbibed from the Montanists the doctrine that martyrdom was to be sought by all means, and some of these sent to Rome, by the subdeacon Crementius, an invidious report of Cyprian's flight. The clergy of the City, as Rome was called, replied by two letters: one informing Cyprian of the martyrdom of their own Bishop Fabian, the other written anonymously, and addressed to the Christians in general. This letter begins with a statement that the writers have heard that "the most blessed Pope Cyprian has for a certain reason retired, and that herein he did rightly as being a remarkable person;" and proceeds to exhort the clergy of Carthage to faithfulness, in a tone which

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<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* lxxx. ; Blunt, *Study of the Fathers*, p. 235.

is not without veiled reproach of the bishop. Cyprian acknowledges both letters. With respect to the martyrdom of Fabian, he writes: "I heartily congratulate you that you honour his memory with a testimony so public and so illustrious, so as to make known to me what is both so glorious to yourselves as regards the memory of your bishop, and may give me, too, an example of faith and virtue." The anonymous letter he sends back, saying that it is not clear who wrote it, or to whom it is written; and the style, contents, and even the paper led him to suspect it had been tampered with. He therefore courteously requests to know if the letter be theirs. Some explanations appear to have passed, which led him to see that his conduct had been reported unfairly, and he therefore thought it necessary to send to Rome a full statement of what he had done, with copies of his correspondence with his brethren at Carthage.

"As soon as the first onset of disturbance arose, and the populace, with violent clamour, demanded me, I, not regarding so much my own safety as the general quiet of the brethren, withdrew for a while; lest by my obstinate presence, the sedition which had begun should be more exasperated. Yet, though absent in body, neither in spirit, nor act, nor advice was I wanting. What I have done my epistles will tell you, which I sent as occasion required, to the number of thirteen, and which I have transmitted to you. In these, neither advice to the clergy, nor exhortation to the confessors, nor



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reproofs when necessary to the banished, nor addresses and persuasions to the whole brotherhood that they might entreat the mercy of God, were wanting on my part.”<sup>1</sup>

His letters amply illustrate the value of his counsel at this time of excitement and disorder. The consequence of the persecution was to exalt beyond all bounds the glory of confessorship. Some of the confessors, among whom the presbyter Rogatian is named, had been sent away into banishment, and with the cessation of their danger relaxed in their strictness of life, so that Cyprian had reason to warn them that, having overcome the adversary in the first encounter, they must still use diligence to follow up so good a beginning worthily. Confessorship, he told them, was not enough without perseverance in the narrow way. He saw signs of a tendency, which afterwards was full of mischief to the African Church, to put spasmodic acts of self-devotion in the place of a consistent holy life, and to imagine that those who had been willing to die for Christ were exempt from common moral obligations, and from the need of vigilance and self-control.

The confessors who remained in prison, some of whom had undergone tortures of exquisite cruelty intended to terrify them into recantation, acquired a fame which threatened to subvert all discipline in the Church. For a time, these con-

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<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* xx. (Newman's translation).

fessors were able to overrule the authority of bishops and presbyters, by the enthusiasm of popular opinion. Their brethren took every possible opportunity to visit them, to bring them offerings, and to solicit their intercession. Most of all the lapsed, who were Christians at heart, but had not dared to disobey the imperial edict and to expose themselves to torture, beset the martyrs and confessors in prison, imploring them to use their influence, that they might be readmitted to communion. Such indulgence had been granted in special cases, and was now abused by promiscuous exercise. "Letters of peace," as they were called, were given by the imprisoned confessors, including whole families, sometimes expressed in the form, "Let such an one, with his friends, be admitted to communion." It was suspected that these letters were given, in some cases, for money.<sup>1</sup>

A certain Lucian, whom Cyprian describes as "glowing in faith and strong in courage, but insufficiently grounded in reading of the Word of the Lord," won for himself great popularity by granting letters of peace to the lapsed. These were issued, not in his own name, but in that of Paulus, a martyr, who died in prison after the torture, and of Aurelius, a youth, who was unable to write, but who had borne banishment, and afterwards torture, with admirable constancy.

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<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* xv., xxvii.

Lucian gave indiscriminately a great number of such letters, not only during the lifetime of Paulus, but after his death, professing to act under instructions received from him. He had the effrontery at last to write a letter to the bishop, in which he assumed for the confessors a right to dictate the absolution of the lapsed in a body, provided they had committed no fresh transgression. This remarkable letter is as follows :—

“All the confessors to Pope Cyprian, greeting,—  
Know that we have granted peace to all of whose behaviour, since the commission of their crime, you are satisfied ; and we desire, through you, to make known this decision to other bishops also. We wish you to maintain peace with the holy martyrs. Lucianus wrote this, there being present of the clergy an exorcist and a reader.”

Caldonius, one of the African bishops, who in Cyprian's absence had the superintendence of the Church of Carthage, reported to his metropolitan some special cases for absolution. A few of those who had sacrificed, repenting, declared themselves to be Christians, and incurred thereby banishment and forfeiture of their property. One woman, Bona, was dragged by her husband to sacrifice, her hands held, and made by force to fling incense on the altar, crying out, “It was you, not I, that did it.” She also was sent into banishment. These, he justly thought, should be restored to the peace of the Church ; but he deprecated rash and indiscriminate pardon. His firmness and prudence

were supported by Cyprian. The lapsed were compelled to undergo penance of more or less duration, according to the circumstances of each case, before restoration to communion. In this decision Cyprian did not act alone, but in counsel with his clergy. He also received a letter from the imprisoned confessors of Rome, acknowledging the support which he had given to the Church by his exhortations and munificence, but especially by his wise severity towards those who had extorted letters of peace too hastily from the presbyters in prison. The lapsed should know, they said, that their case is better provided for by the very delay, and that remedies are more sure for being used with discretion.<sup>1</sup>

In a treatise which Cyprian wrote at this time, he draws a vivid picture of the remorse which took possession of those who denied Christ, and adds many extraordinary particulars which came under his own observation.<sup>2</sup> One man was struck dumb on the spot. A woman was seized with frenzy, and, after biting her own tongue, died in convulsions. An infant, left behind at nurse by parents who fled in terror, was brought to the magistrates, and bread sopped in wine from an idol feast was given to it. When the mother got back her child, and brought it to receive the Holy Eucharist, which used to be given to infants, it turned its face away and refused the cup. An older

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<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* lv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *De Lapsis*, 16.

child, who had secretly introduced herself into the congregation after partaking of a heathen sacrifice, fell down in agony, quivering and trembling, as soon as she received the Eucharistic bread, and confessed. Another, who took home with her the reserved sacrament, found it turned to fire. Another found that the sacrament turned in his hands to cinder, in sign of divine judgment on his apostasy.

The Decian persecution came to an end in less than two years, as suddenly as it began. Decius fell in battle against the Goths, and with his successor new schemes of policy were taken up. The surviving Christians came back from the mines or from prison utterly destitute, often broken in health by the hardships which they had undergone, and marked with bruises and scars from cruel torture. For some reason the rulers appear to have taken a different course from that which had been taken in former persecutions. Instead of making an open show of their martyrdom, by exposing them to wild beasts in the amphitheatre, the imperial officers tormented them privately, in the hope of subduing their fortitude and forcing them to recant. It had been found probably that scenes of public martyrdom, like those which took place under Severus, excited more sympathy than terror; and it was thought that Christians in general and their friends would be intimidated by facility of access to confessors who were kept in unhealthy dungeons, half suffocated with smoke, pining with hunger and thirst,

and waiting their turn to be subjected to sharper torments, the most dreaded of which was an instrument with sharp hooks drawn over their flesh.

Among those who had been firm in their confession, two were selected, on the close of the persecution, as worthy to be ordained readers, as a step to the priesthood: Aurelius, the young man who has been already mentioned, and had distinguished himself not only by his fortitude but by the modesty of his behaviour; and Celerinus, who for fourteen days had lain on the rack and in irons, and was descended from a family of martyrs, two of his uncles and his grandmother having formerly undergone martyrdom. Cyprian excuses himself to his clergy for making these appointments without consulting them, as usual, on account of the eminent merit of these confessors. Both of them had been associated with Lucian, and it is likely that Cyprian desired specially to mark his sense of the virtue of those confessors, while his duty required him to censure Lucian's presumption, and to oppose the claims which were founded by the lapsed on Lucian's letters of peace.

Cyprian returned to Carthage in A.D. 252, finding quietness restored to the city; but new troubles awaited him, growing out of the recent persecution, and he was soon involved in a serious internal dispute, which threatened the Church with schism. The unhappy Christians who had lapsed, bitterly disappointed at his refusal to accept the letters of peace, kept up a persistent agitation. They

were divided into two classes—the *Thurificati*, who had actually offered sacrifice to the heathen gods; and the *Libellatici*, who had evaded sacrifice by obtaining certificates which implied a disavowal of Christianity. The latter, on their acknowledgment of penitence, were to be restored to communion; the former were kept on probation for a time, though, in case of peril of death, they also were to be allowed the sacraments. But there were members of the Church at Carthage who had no good will to Cyprian, and who stirred up the discontented to form a party against him. Chief among these was *Felicissimus*, who had had the administration of part of the Church funds during the persecution, and was found guilty of embezzlement. He had supporters in the five presbyters who had opposed Cyprian's election, one of whom, *Novatus*, is compared by Cyprian to a whirlwind, for his noisy turbulence. The character given of *Novatus* is almost incredibly bad. His alleged appropriation of the revenues of the Church is the least of his delinquencies. He is accused by *Pacian* of having turned his father out of doors and left him to die of hunger, and of having also kicked his pregnant wife and caused her to miscarry.<sup>1</sup> Cyprian's description nearly corresponds with this,<sup>2</sup> and adds that he had long been notorious at Carthage for his love of mischief, his avarice, pride, and treachery.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pacian*, iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Cyprian*, *Epist.* lii.



Novatus, acting on his own authority, ordained Felicissimus deacon, and caused so much disquiet at Carthage, that Cyprian postponed his return until after Easter. His prolonged absence is difficult to understand, but it may be explained by a modern parallel: the conduct of the French Government in remaining at Versailles instead of returning to Paris, in 1870. There is abundant evidence of the violent passions of the mob at Carthage both at this time and afterwards. Even the Christians were easily excited to tumult; the heathen were glad to make use of their discord to their destruction; and Cyprian's charge was not only over the city but over the whole of North Africa.

When at length Cyprian came back, Felicissimus, whom he excommunicated, found means to assemble five Numidian bishops who had lapsed, and procured the consecration of Fortunatus as Bishop of Carthage. One of these Numidians was Privatus, a bishop from the district of Lambesa, who had been condemned for heresy by a Council of ninety bishops many years before. With him was Felix, who had been made bishop by Privatus after his condemnation; Jovinus and Maximus, who had sacrificed; and Repostus, who had not only sacrificed, but had encouraged his people to do so.<sup>1</sup>

After the consecration, Felicissimus hurried to Rome, whither Novatus had preceded him, and announced that Fortunatus had been appointed by

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<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* lix.

twenty-five bishops. With their departure peace was temporarily restored to Carthage, for Fortunatus was not able to hold his ground against Cyprian, and his followers soon deserted him. But the question of the lapsed was raised at Rome also, and complicated with party disputes, in which the factious spirit of Novatus found new and wider opportunities of division.

About this time Cyprian wrote his treatise on the unity of the Church, which of all his writings, perhaps, has the most permanent value. Beginning by the observation that Christians have to dread not only the open assaults of Satan in persecution, but his secret craft in sowing division, he proceeds to show that unity is the principle on which the Church is built. He illustrates this principle by the words of Christ to Peter, "On this rock I will build My Church," taking care at the same time to affirm that the other Apostles were what Peter was, "endued with an equal fellowship both of honour and power." The episcopate, he says, is properly one and undivided, though there are many bishops ; and the Church likewise is one, though spread abroad and increasing, "even as the sun has rays many, yet one light ; and the tree boughs many ; and many streams flow from one source." He uses other comparisons, which have since become familiar, of the ark of Noah, and of the seamless coat of Christ. He also refers to the words of Christ, "I and the Father are one:" to the disputed text, 1 John v. 7, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

“These three are one ;” and to the words, “There shall be one flock and one shepherd.” The sum of his argument is expressed in the strong words, “He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.”

There is extant a curious treatise in verse, which probably belongs to the same time and place.<sup>1</sup> The author, Commodianus, was a converted heathen, and apparently one of the lapsed. His work, which is entitled *Instructiones*, and is written in halting hexameters, is an exhortation to heathens and Christians to holy living, with special reference to the duty of patience and loyalty to the Church on the part of Christian penitents, as may be seen from the following passages :—

“I myself long did err in former time,  
A heathen, son of parents ignorant,  
Until the reading of the Law compelled me  
Temples and worldly pleasures to forsake.  
I deemed true life to be in this world only,  
And death of body to be death of soul.

“One of yourselves it is who warns you now.  
Be not desponding, sinners, but beware ;  
Pray night and day, depart not from your Mother ;  
Perchance the Highest will have mercy on you.  
I myself, brethren, risen from the mire,  
Speak to you in compassion, not in pride.

“If certain teachers, looking for your gifts,  
Or in respect of persons, are indulgent,  
I am constrained in grief to speak the truth.”

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, ii. 448.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY.

FREQUENT communication between Rome and Carthage had been maintained under all the miseries of the Decian persecution. Adversity drew the brethren more closely together. The unity of the Church, as one society, however widely dispersed, gave strength to the members who in any particular place were unable to assemble for worship or for counsel ; and at this time the Christians of both cities were in need of mutual sympathy, being without their chief pastors. For the greater part of the time during which Cyprian withdrew himself from Carthage, Rome was without a bishop. Fabian was martyred at the outset of the persecution, and Decius declared that he would rather see another emperor, than another bishop, at Rome. It was not till June, 251, that the vacant place was filled up by the election of Cornelius.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of Cornelius for bishop was not

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<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* lv. 7.

acceptable to some of the clergy and people ; and a rival bishop, Novatian, was hastily consecrated. Messengers from Novatian were at once despatched to Carthage, to notify his appointment, and, in their eagerness to obtain recognition for him, they broke in upon the bishop and congregation while they were assembled for worship, and demanded clamorously that their case might be heard by the clergy and people. Two African bishops, however, Pompeius and Stephanus, had arrived before them, and had given such information to Cyprian and his colleagues that they refused to listen to the messengers of Novatian.

Among the promoters of the schism of Novatian an active part was taken by the Carthaginian Novatus.<sup>1</sup> Similarity of name has led to some confusion between the two, but their difference of character is strongly marked in the letters of Cyprian and Cornelius. Novatus had the talents of a party leader : a busy, versatile man, ready in employing violence or craft to accomplish his ends. Novatian was a recluse. He professed to have no ambition for preferment, and styled himself a philosopher. His literary abilities gave him a distinguished place among the Roman clergy when the bishopric was vacant. Stern and unsocial in disposition, he blamed the new bishop, Cornelius, for excessive lenity to the lapsed. Under no circumstances, he held, should they be restored to Chris-

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<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* lii. ; Eusebius, vi. 43.

tian fellowship. God might show them mercy on their repentance, but a Church which admitted them to communion was no true Church, and should be shunned by the faithful.

Thus arose a schism at Rome, simultaneously with that at Carthage, and concerning the same question, the reception of the lapsed. But Cyprian and Cornelius were attacked from opposite quarters. The one was accused of undue severity, the other of undue laxity. The result showed the advantage of the course which was taken by the Bishop of Carthage. His adversaries melted away in a few months as the expectation of pardon drew nearer. The faithful saw before them a prospect of early readmission to communion; and those who were unstable and impatient of penance fell back, and confirmed by their fall the wisdom of his judgment. Cornelius, on the other hand, taking a somewhat more indulgent course, had for adversaries all the most rigid and fanatical spirits in the Church, especially some of the confessors, who, not being themselves the authors of pardon to the lapsed, felt the virtue of their confession slighted. Moreover, the mischief of granting reconciliation too easily could not be healed by time. The Novatianists proclaimed everywhere that the Church was tainted by the admission of unworthy members. They assumed to themselves the name of Cathari, or Puritans, and made alliance with similar factions in the East.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 120.

Between the rigour of the Novatianists and that of the Montanists, there was so much natural affinity, that they eventually combined.

It is probable that the schism of Novatian was indirectly of service to Cyprian in maintaining order at Carthage. While his rival, Fortunatus, was still making a feeble attempt to oppose his authority in the name of toleration to the lapsed, the Novatianists set up another rival bishop, Maximus, to maintain at Carthage their implacable exclusion of the lapsed. Novatianist bishops were appointed for other parts of Africa. Between the two extremes the moderation of Cyprian approved itself to all loyal Churchmen. The party of Fortunatus died out rapidly; and that of Novatian survived in Africa only as an offshoot from abroad.

During the same year, 252, a plague of unexampled severity swept over the whole Roman Empire, and made fearful havoc in the dense population of Carthage. Its symptoms, as described minutely by Cyprian, were horrible: "The body drained by an inward flux, fire in the marrow breaking out in wounds upon the throat, the entrails shaken by continual vomiting, the eyes made bloodshot by fever, parts of the body removed through access of putrid disease," with loss of strength to move, of hearing, and of sight.<sup>1</sup> In the general terror of infection, large numbers of the citizens fled, leaving their friends to die, or carried

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<sup>1</sup> *De Mortalitate.*



them out of houses to die in the streets. Corpses in multitudes lay about the whole city, with none of their kindred to bury them.<sup>1</sup>

The selfishness of the heathen set off by contrast the charity of the Christians, who undertook the care not only of their own sick, but of their neighbours. Cyprian, like the good Bishop Bel-sunce of Marseilles in modern times,

“When nature sickened and each gale was death,”

set his people an example which did much to allay the panic. “We should answer to our birth,” he told them; “it is not fit that they should degenerate who are known to have been born again of God. The seed of a good Father should appear in the offspring, by our imitation of His goodness.” He proceeded to organize a system of relief and visitation of the sick, and burial of the dead. At the same time he did not omit to point the contrast between the timidity of the heathen and the courage of the Christians. The pestilence returned in the following year and for several years afterwards, causing widespread depopulation of the Roman Empire. Its duration is said to have extended over fifteen years, with more or less virulence.<sup>2</sup> In Alexandria, the only place where an accurate census was preserved, the number of inhabitants was reduced to one-half; and there is no reason to suppose that the mortality was greater there than elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Pontius, x.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, ch. x.

There was an outcry in Carthage against the Christians, as having caused the pestilence by provoking the anger of the gods. For a time Cyprian treated this murmur with contempt, relying on the practical arguments for Christianity which were given by the example of Christians. But the same charge being repeated by some persons in high authority at Carthage, he wrote a treatise to refute it.<sup>1</sup> Part of Cyprian's argument is so characteristic of the time, that it has an interest apart from its special purpose: "Learn, in the first place, that the world is now in its old age. Even though we should not say so, it attests its own ruin in the tottering state of things. The showers of winter fail us for nourishing of the seeds; the sun's heat in summer for ripening the corn; nor in spring-tide do the fields display their usual growth; and the trees of autumn are barren of their accustomed issue. Mountains yield a shortened store of marble slabs; the exhausted mines send up but a scanty wealth of silver and gold, their impoverished veins day by day are narrowed and diminished; while the husbandman languishes in the fields, the sailor at sea, the soldier in the camp; honesty sinks in the mart, justice from the tribunal, love from friendships, skill from the arts, and discipline from conduct." "You charge the Christians that as the world grows old all things decay: what if old men should charge the Christians that bodily vigour diminishes

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<sup>1</sup> *Ad Demetrianum*, 2.

with years?" He retorts upon the heathen their own accusation, saying, "These things befall us, not because your gods are not worshipped by us, but because God has no worship from you." And he points to passage after passage of inspired prophecy, foretelling such visitations of pestilence and famine as judgments on those who reject Him. He reproaches them with their cruelty in tormenting the Christians, and calls upon them to leave their gods to protect their own majesty if they can. The tone of the whole treatise is that of lofty superiority. He felt already that the Church was so strong in numbers and in moral dignity, as to be able to look down upon the heathen world, as from a commanding height.

In place of the fierce invective of Tertullian, which implies an actual predominance of the heathen power, Cyprian uses a more sedate style, befitting the position of a bishop, whose strongest argument was before the eyes of all men, in the aspect of the Church as it existed; its zeal, its holiness, its charity, its steady growth and ascendancy over the waning lights and dying fires of paganism.

Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, died a martyr's death within little more than a year after his election, and his successor, Lucius, lived only a few months before he was called to seal his faith with his blood. The next bishop, Stephen, notwithstanding the perilous tenure of his office, disturbed the whole Church by his quarrelsome temper. The

disputes which he had with other bishops gave occasion, however, to the decision of an important point of ecclesiastical discipline: how proselytes, who had been baptized by heretics, were to be received into the Church. Local customs differed. In the Eastern Churches rebaptism was usual; at Rome, those who had been once baptized, by whomsoever the sacrament had been administered, received no second Baptism, but were admitted to communion with the Church by the imposition of hands. In Africa there was not yet an uniform rule. A synod at Carthage, under Agrippinus, who was bishop at the end of the second century, had ruled in favour of rebaptism;<sup>1</sup> but this had reference to particular heresies then prevailing, and was not understood to bind the African Church in general. The question was opened afresh by the Novatianist schism, and was much embittered by the conduct of the Novatianists, who rebaptized seceders from the Church, before admitting them to fellowship.

Apostolic tradition was pleaded for and against rebaptism. The difference of usage between Rome and the East may probably be explained by the different forms which heresy had taken. The heresies known in the West were chiefly factious divisions, in which the principles of Christian faith were not so involved as in the Eastern heresies, which related to the Persons and attributes of the

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, i.

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Holy Trinity. It was natural, therefore, that, in the absence of any definite and discriminating rule on the subject, the Eastern Churches should reject heretical Baptism as null, and that the Western Churches should regard it as valid, taking into consideration the kind of cases with which they had to deal. Not till Stephen opposed the judgment of Cyprian was the attention of the Church fully drawn to the question—What are the essential conditions of valid Baptism? Stephen had already refused communion to some Asiatic bishops,<sup>1</sup> on account of disagreement in practice from that of Rome, when the question arose in Africa, and caused so much agitation, that three Councils in succession were summoned in order to set it at rest.

The first of these Councils, in the year 255, was composed of bishops of the province of Africa, numbering thirty-two, and the letter which records their decision is addressed to eighteen Numidian bishops. It brings forward several arguments against the validity of heretical Baptism, some of which illustrate the customs of the early Church. The substance of the letter is to the effect that heretics, being unclean, cannot make others clean: that the interrogatory which is put in Baptism, “Dost thou believe in eternal life and remission of sins through the holy Church?” implies that sins cannot be remitted, where the Church is not: that

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 122, 123.

the chrism bestowed after Baptism cannot be sanctified among heretics : that if heretics can baptize, they can also give the Holy Ghost. For these reasons they conclude that heretical Baptism is no true Baptism.<sup>1</sup>

Two Mauretanian bishops, Quintus and Jubai-anus, wrote to Cyprian for advice on this matter, and received from him copies of this letter, and also of the acts of a Council in which bishops of Africa and Numidia were assembled together, to the number of seventy-one, and confirmed the sentence of the lesser Council. Cyprian disclaims at the same time any wish to dictate to other bishops, or to interfere with the exercise of their own judgment.

A report of the same proceedings was sent by Cyprian to Rome, in a friendly letter to Stephen, in which he says, "These things, dearest brother, by reason of our mutual respect and single-hearted affection, we have brought to thy knowledge, believing that what is alike religious and true will, according to the truth of thy religion and faith, be approved by thee also."

Stephen's idea of the episcopal office was very different from Cyprian's. He assumed a peremptory tone, for which his relation to the Church of Carthage gave him no excuse. "If any shall come to you from any heresy whatsoever, be there no innovations, beyond what has been handed down ;

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<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, *Epistles* lxxi., lxxiii.

namely, that hands be laid on such to repentance." The position taken by Stephen was based on simple and intelligible grounds. First, the custom of the Roman Church: second, the words of St. Paul, "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism:" third, the analogy of cases within the Church, in which the minister was sometimes unworthy, and yet the sacrament was nevertheless held to be valid. Of this argument from analogy much was said by Augustine and others in later times.<sup>1</sup> Stephen himself relied apparently more on the authority of custom.

The arguments of Cyprian and his colleagues on the contrary side were numerous and weighty. He contended that tradition ought not to prevail over reason and divine ordinance, and that Apostolic tradition alleged in this matter was not to the purpose, since the more grievous heresies were new. The text, "One Baptism," he claims as excluding heretical Baptism. He, as usual, compares the Church to the ark of Noah, and denies that we can be saved by any Baptism other than that of the Church. In these views he was supported by Firmilian, a Cappadocian bishop, a friend of Origen, and one of the most venerated men of his time. Firmilian blamed the inhumanity of Stephen, who appears to have broken off communion with Cyprian; and he stated some extreme cases in which, as he considered, heretical Baptism ought

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<sup>1</sup> Aug. *De Bapt.*



not to be recognized; in particular that of a woman who gave herself out to be a prophetess in Asia Minor, and baptized many, using the proper form of words.

On the 1st of September, 256, Cyprian convened a third Council at Carthage, which was attended by no less than eighty-five bishops, with many presbyters and deacons. Cyprian called upon the bishops separately to give their opinion. "None of us," he said, with palpable allusion to Stephen—"none of us setteth himself up as a bishop of bishops, or by tyrannical terror forceth his colleagues to a necessity of obeying, inasmuch as every bishop, in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he can himself judge another."

The bishops proceeded to give their sentence, one by one, the Numidians and Mauretians being conspicuous for the asperity with which they spoke. Every one rejected the Baptism administered by heretics as invalid.<sup>1</sup>

Cæcilius of Bilta, a Mauretanian bishop, said—

"I know of one Baptism in the Church, and out of the Church none. Among heretics there is no hope, and a false faith. These, brethren, we ought to shun and avoid."

Polycarp of Adrumetum said—

"They who sanction the Baptism of heretics

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<sup>1</sup> A full account of the Council is given in Cyprian's *Epistles*.

make ours void." The same was repeated by several.

Nemesianus of Thubunæ said—

"That the Baptism which heretics and schismatics give is not true, is everywhere declared in the Holy Scriptures." He quotes from Proverbs: "Abstain from strange water;" and he interprets the words of Christ, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit," to refer to Baptism and imposition of hands. "Ill therefore to themselves do those interpret, who say that by imposition of hands they receive the Holy Ghost, and are so admitted; whereas it is manifest that they ought, by both sacraments, to be born again in the Catholic Church."

Secundinus of Ceditas, in Mauretania, quoted the words of Christ—

"He that is not with Me is against Me."

Felix of Bagai, in Numidia, quoted—

"If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch."

Sedatus of Thuburbo said—

"As water sanctified by the prayer of the priest in the Church washes away sins, so infected by the word of heretics as with a cancer does it add sins."

Castus of Sicca denounced those who despise truth to follow custom.

Libosus of Vaga, in Numidia, said likewise—  
"The Lord said, 'I am the Truth;' He did not say, 'I am custom.'"

Lucianus of Rucuma said—

“It is written, ‘God divided the light from the darkness.’ If light and darkness can agree, we may have something in common with heretics.”

Venantius of Tinisa said—

“If a husband going a distant journey had committed his wife to the care of his friend, that friend would preserve her with all the diligence he could. Christ our Lord and God, going to His Father, hath committed His spouse to us.”

Saturninus of Thucca, in Numidia, a confessor, said that “even the heathen who worship idols, confess the one Supreme God whom Marcion blasphemes, and some are not ashamed to approve the baptism of Marcion.” The invalidity of Marcion’s baptism had been particularly noticed in Cyprian’s letters.

Secundianus of Thambei, who suffered afterwards as a martyr, said—

“We ought not to withhold Baptism from heretics who return to us, lest in the day of judgment they impute to us that by our fault they have not obtained remission of sins.”

These are a few of the judgments uttered by Cyprian’s colleagues, all of which were in harmony with his own. In the following year Stephen suffered martyrdom in a persecution at Rome. His place was taken by a more pacific bishop, Sixtus.

The Baptismal controversy was left for the time to the local use of each Church. Being afterwards

revived, it was debated at the important Council of Arles, in A.D. 314, and a Canon was passed, which was afterwards accepted throughout the Church, that if Baptism had been administered by heretics in the name of the Holy Trinity, converts should be admitted to the Church by imposition of hands.

Thus the judgment of the Councils of Carthage was overruled by the Council of Arles, and the later decision was afterwards accepted throughout the Church. At that time the African Church was divided by a great schism, and those who accepted or rejected the Council of Arles on one question, accepted or rejected it on all.

The reconciliation of the Cathari, as the followers of Novatian styled themselves, is the subject of the eighth Canon of the General Council held at Nicæa, in A.D. 325. They continued, however, to form a separate sect, and are mentioned again in the Canons of the second General Council, held at Constantinople in A.D. 381.<sup>1</sup> A remnant of the Novatianists is said to have been surviving at Alexandria as late as the sixth century.<sup>2</sup> Their principles consisted of little else than a renunciation of the Church for its laxity of discipline. Hence this party received a fresh impulse from time to time, whenever a dispute arose as to the measure of severity to be used with offenders; and in some sense they have never ceased to exist.

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<sup>1</sup> *Can. Constantinop.*, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, i. 121.

In Augustine's treatise on Baptism, he controverts with great critical skill the arguments of Cyprian and the other bishops who rejected heretical Baptism. At the same time, he speaks with deep affection and reverence of Cyprian as one "who, in proportion to his greatness, humbled himself in all things." "If, with the whole Church, I in anything hold more truly, yet will I not prefer my own heart to his."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this controversy, the relation of the Church of Carthage to that of Rome was that of equality, as of two members of a federal union. In some respects Carthage holds the more prominent place, in virtue of the personal distinction of the bishop, and of the greater number of suffragans who came together to his Councils; while he does not fail to acknowledge the pre-eminence of Rome as capital of the empire, and as the seat of a Church founded by the Apostles. Cyprian wrote to Stephen as an equal, exhorting him to use his authority in Gaul, for the excommunication of Marcianus, the Novatianist Bishop of Arles.<sup>2</sup> He also sent a letter, in the name of himself and thirty-six of his colleagues, to the Christian congregations in Spain, who had consulted him, to confirm the excommunication of the Bishops of Leon and Astorga (Basilides and Martialis), who had lapsed. He approves the ordination of Felix and Sabinus

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<sup>1</sup> See Newman's translation of St. Cyprian's letters, p. 258, note.

<sup>2</sup> Cyprian, *Epistles* lxxvii., lxxviii.

in their place, and reprobates the conduct of Basilides, who, as he writes, "canvassing to be restored to the episcopate from which he had been justly deposed, went to Rome, and deceived Stephen, our colleague, residing at a distance, and ignorant of what had been done." Neither Carthage nor Rome had any defined authority over the Churches in Spain; but as powerful members of the great Christian confederation, their agreement went far to affirm the judgment of the Universal Church. Each of the several Churches exercised an independent power of fixing the limits of its own communion, but this power was understood to be subject to a paramount duty of union with other Churches, in the principles of doctrine and discipline.

There is, however, a certain tone of authority in the letter of the African bishops to Spain. The Spanish Churches were supposed to be founded by St. Paul, and were long independent of the Bishop of Rome.<sup>1</sup> It is not improbable that, in the revival of Carthage, something of the old Carthaginian influence in Spain was restored.

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<sup>1</sup> Clemens Romanus, I. v. ; Neander, i. 116 ; Bingham, *Antiq.*, ix. I.



## CHAPTER VI.

### MARTYRDOM OF CYPRIAN.

THE organization of government under the Roman Empire was so complete, that the changes of the ruling emperor's mind were felt at once throughout his dominions. Valerian was an old man when he was elected to the throne by acclamation. He had held the office of censor under Decius, a proof in itself of the high esteem in which his character was held; and it was said of him that if mankind had been left at liberty to choose a master, this choice would assuredly have fallen on Valerian.<sup>1</sup> During the first few years of his reign he justified this praise by the energy and mildness of his administration. But with advancing age his character grew weak. He took his unworthy son Gallienus as colleague, and placed unbounded confidence in his prefect Macrianus, who obtained his signature to edicts of persecution against the Christians. Thus, after an interval of repose, the Church was

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. x.



exposed once more to a trial of faith. Of this persecution the great Bishop of Carthage was one of the first victims.

On the 30th of August, A.D. 257, the proconsul Paternus summoned Cyprian to his council chamber at Carthage, and addressed him as follows :<sup>1</sup>—"The most sacred Emperors Valerian and Gallienus have honoured me with letters, wherein they enjoin that all those who are not of the religion of Rome shall formally make profession of their return to the use of Roman rites. I have made, accordingly, inquiry after you. What answer do you make?"

Cyprian answered, "I am a Christian, and a bishop; I know no other gods besides the one true God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein. This God we Christians serve; to Him we pray day and night, for ourselves, for all mankind, for the health of the emperors themselves."

Paternus asked, "Do you persist in this purpose?" Cyprian assented. "Are you, then, willing to go into exile to the city of Curubis, in obedience to the mandate of the emperors?" Cyprian said, "I go." The proconsul proceeded to ask for information who were presbyters in the city. Cyprian's reply was that the Roman law, righteously, and with great benefit, had forbidden any to be informers. The proconsul then explained that he was authorized to act as inquisitor, to forbid as-

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<sup>1</sup> *Proconsular Acts.*

semblies for worship and meetings at the cemeteries, under pain of death. Cyprian told him that Christians were forbidden to offer themselves for punishment, but that they might easily be discovered.

In accordance with the imperial mandate, Cyprian was escorted into banishment at Curubis, a city on the sea-coast, about forty miles to the south-east of Carthage.<sup>1</sup> The place was pleasantly situated, and the treatment which he received was evidently respectful. Cyprian's personal qualities would have made it difficult for any one to treat him otherwise than with respect; and the high office which he held in the Church had, by this time, won recognition for itself even from the imperial power. Under emperors who had shown favour to the Christians, such as Alexander Severus and Valerian at the beginning of his reign, the social position of the Bishop of Carthage was little inferior to that of a modern Bishop of Calcutta or Bombay; less definitely supported by the sanction and countenance of the representatives of the State, but having a strong hold on the affections of a far larger proportion of the people. In the rich city of Carthage there were not a few wealthy Christians. The relation of fellowship in which they stood to their brethren in other cities on the coast of the Mediterranean, gave them peculiar

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<sup>1</sup> Davis places Curubis across the bay, in sight of Carthage, and describes it as having hot springs. In the maps it is placed on the open coast, facing eastward.

facilities for commerce, which was mutually advantageous. Profitable trade depends mainly on credit; and the Christians, like the Jews, reaped the benefit of the confidence which they were able to place in each other. The villa in which Cyprian had lived before his conversion, and which he describes as "a secret spot made for retirement," with its portico overgrown with vines, was bought back for his use by his flock, after he had sold it for the benefit of the poor; and here he usually lived, in circumstances which, though full of danger and anxiety, were otherwise not incompatible with comfort.

On his arrival at Curubis, Cyprian had a vision, or dream, which he related to his faithful companion and archdeacon, Pontius. "There appeared to me, before I was yet sunk in slumber, a young man above the human stature, by whom I was led as if to the prætorium, and seemed to be brought to the tribunal of the proconsul. He, on seeing me, began to write on a tablet a sentence which I could not see, but the young man leaned over and read it, and showed what had been set down by signs, opening his hand and striking it down edgeways like a blade."

For a time, however, he was left unmolested in his place of banishment. His friends had free access to him, and he found means to send letters of condolence, with money, to some of his brethren who had been sent to work in the mines. The proconsul showed no disposition to take extreme measures.

His conduct indicates a suspicion on his part that the hostile policy of the emperor towards the Christians might be reversed. In the mean while he gave to the imperial edict no more than a formal and perfunctory obedience.

A year elapsed, and Paternus was succeeded by Galerius Maximus, who recalled Cyprian from exile. He returned to his own villa near Carthage, and waited there for the summons to appear before the new proconsul. His friends, including some of the foremost men in the province of Africa, came to him and urged him to fly, offering to him convenient places of refuge. A messenger from Rome, sent by Bishop Sixtus, warned him to expect death speedily. On the 13th of September, A.D. 258, two of the chief officers of the proconsul, the marshal of the guard, and the chief gaoler, came and took him away between them in a chariot to Sexti, a place about six miles from Carthage, whither Galerius had retired for the sake of his health. He was privately lodged for the night in the house of the chief gaoler, which is described as in the street of Saturn, between the temples of Venus and Salus. A great crowd of Christians of both sexes flocked round the gate, and Cyprian requested that the young women might be protected, for they waited all night to see their bishop brought out for trial. In the morning Cyprian was summoned to appear before the proconsul.

The prætorium was at some distance, and the

way lay past the race-course, which suggested to his faithful companion, Pontius, the spiritual race which was drawing to a close, and the expected crown. When he reached the court, he was allowed to sit down in a private room, the proconsul not having yet arrived. The heat and excitement of the journey, surrounded by a crowd of weeping men and women, made him perspire profusely; and one of the officers of the court, a lapsed Christian, offered him a change of garments; but Cyprian refused, saying "it would be seeking a remedy for discomfort which might perchance not last out the day." It was noticed that his seat was covered with linen, as was customary for a bishop's chair.<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly the proconsul was announced, and Cyprian was led into court. The examination was confined to a few plain questions and answers.

"Are you Thascius Cyprianus?" "I am he."

"The most sacred emperors have commanded you to conform to the Roman rites." "I refuse to do so."

"Take heed for yourself." "Execute the emperors' orders: in a matter so manifest I cannot hesitate."

Galerius conferred with his council with evident unwillingness to pass sentence of condemnation; but the emperor's will had been expressed in a second and more stringent edict, which left him

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<sup>1</sup> Pontius, xvi.

no choice. At length he spoke as follows:—"You have long lived sacrilegiously, and have drawn together a number of men bound by an unlawful compact, and professed yourself an enemy to the gods and religion of Rome; and the pious, most sacred, and august emperors, Valerian and Gallienus, have endeavoured in vain to bring you back to conformity with their religion. Whereas, then, you have been apprehended as a principal and ringleader in these infamous crimes, you shall be made an example of to those who have been wickedly associated with you. The authority of law shall be ratified in your blood." He then read from a written tablet the sentence of the court. "It is the will of this court that Thascius Cyprianus be immediately beheaded." Cyprian merely said, "Thanks be to God." But his people could not restrain their emotion. A clamour rose immediately from the multitude of Christian spectators, crying, "We will be beheaded with him."

No time was lost in proceeding to execution of the sentence. Cyprian was led, under a strong military guard, to a field outside the town, the crowd following. The place of execution was surrounded by trees at some distance, which were climbed by many of the spectators, unable to obtain a nearer view. On coming to the spot, he laid aside his cloak, knelt down, and prayed. Then he took off his dalmatic, giving it to the deacons, and stood wearing his tunic only. The brethren spread linen cloths and napkins before him, on the ground

where his blood was likely to fall. As soon as the executioner appeared, Cyprian ordered twenty-five pieces of gold to be given to him, probably in lieu of his usual perquisites, the garments, which would be more precious to his friends; or it may be significantly, as indicating his grateful sense of the favour which he was about to receive at his hands. He then bound his own eyes, and the executioner, whose trembling fingers could hardly grasp the sword, fulfilled his office.

Orders were given that the body should be exposed in a place where the heathen might see it, for the great fame of Cyprian inspired them with a mingled feeling of curiosity and awe. This was done accordingly; but in the night the Christians took their martyred bishop's body, and conveyed it in solemn procession, with funeral torches and wax tapers, "to the burying-ground of Macrobius Candidianus, the procurator, near the fish-ponds on the Mappalian Way." <sup>1</sup>

Among the many Bishops of Carthage who preceded Cyprian, none is recorded to have suffered martyrdom, though in other parts of Africa bishops are said to have won the martyr's crown.<sup>2</sup> His death was followed by an almost immediate change in the imperial policy towards the Christians. An edict of Gallienus, in A.D. 259, gave sanction to Christianity for the first time as a "religio licita," a religion allowed by law.

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<sup>1</sup> *Proconsular Acts.*

<sup>2</sup> *Epist. lxxvi.*



Of those who in later times have taken Cyprian for a model, the larger number have chosen to imitate him chiefly in that firm assertion of episcopal authority and the unity of the Church, which was forced upon him by the opposition of unruly and factious men. There are comparatively few who have adequately appreciated the more characteristic qualities, to which Augustine, for one, did full justice: his patience, his gentleness, his care for others rather than for himself. Cyprian is less distinguished as a champion of the rights of bishops, than as an advocate of conference between bishops and presbyters. His mind has never been more truly imbibed by any who have studied his acts and writings, than by a bishop of our own day, who thus addressed his clergy in his first episcopal charge—

“It was in days of persecution and danger, when the crown of martyrdom was at hand, that Cyprian said to his presbyters, ‘I will do nothing in your absence.’ I would rather resign my office than be reduced to act as a single and isolated being. In such a position, my true character, I conceive, would be entirely lost.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who have had the privilege of hearing and seeing the late Bishop of New Zealand have had before them as near a counterpart as modern times afford of the famous Bishop of Carthage, not in the circumstances so much as in the spirit of

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Selwyn*, vol. i. p. 247.

his life ; in the happy combination of many various qualities, firmness and sweetness, fortitude and prudence, authority and humility ; in the ready command of all the armoury of Holy Scripture ; in the willingness to die or live as God might direct ; in the calm and heroic courage which was governed, not by consideration of human praise and blame, but by a simple regard to Christian duty.





## CHAPTER VII.

### MANICHÆISM—THE LAST PERSECUTION.

VALERIAN'S reign, which had begun with the fairest hopes of prosperity to the empire, closed with a disaster to which there is no parallel in the annals of Rome. He led an army across the Euphrates, A.D. 260, against the Persians, who had lately shown a revival of the courage which seemed to have forsaken them since the time of Darius. A battle took place under the walls of Edessa, the ancient Ur of the Chaldees, and the Romans were defeated by the Persian king, who surrounded the Roman army and forced Valerian to surrender. The conqueror, who, in common with several kings of the same line, bore the name of Sapor, is alleged to have treated his imperial captive with marked humiliation and insult; Valerian was compelled to bow down his back for the Persian king to step on in mounting his horse; and stories of more doubtful credibility add that, after Sapor had sufficiently gratified his pride in this manner, he

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flayed the unfortunate emperor alive, and preserved his skin, stuffed with straw, as a trophy.

Following up their success over Valerian, the Persians invaded Syria, Cilicia, and Cappadocia. In the flush of his triumph, Sapor presumed to nominate a successor to the empire, one of the Roman generals, with whose aid he surprised the city of Antioch, the capital of the East, lying secure behind its mountain ramparts, and unprepared for any foreign invasion. The anarchy of the next few years was so great in the terror caused by the Persian victories, and the intrigues of rival commanders, that Gallienus continued to be emperor only in name.

It was at this time, by a coincidence which cannot be deemed accidental, that a Persian, Mani, became known as the author of a new doctrine combining Christian and heathen elements. Mani was born about A.D. 240, and in 287 or soon afterwards his heresy had made such progress in the province of Africa, that an imperial edict was issued against it. Some of his followers are said to have appeared at Carthage as early as 278.<sup>1</sup> They took the denomination of Manichæans, to avoid the ridicule which might attach to the ill-sounding name of Manians or Maniacs; and for many centuries afterwards the Church had no more formidable adversaries. The Manichæan system was essentially a compromise between Christianity and heathenism.

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.

As such it had many attractions for those intelligent heathen who were ashamed of the fables of the Greek and Roman mythology, but shrank from the pure simplicity of the Christian faith.

The personal history of Mani is very obscure. Two narratives of his life are extant, one Greek, the other Persian; inconsistent with each other in many particulars, and of no great authority, being probably composed long after his death, and showing much legendary perversion of facts. That he was a man of extraordinary genius is certain, and there is every reason to believe that he was a native of Persia, who by some means had received instruction in the Christian religion. According to one account, he was a Christian presbyter; according to another, two of his disciples simulated Christianity to procure a copy of the Holy Scriptures. These two contradictory reports may be no more than attempts to explain by conjecture his undoubted acquaintance with Christian doctrines, a fact which is not difficult to understand. The hurricane of Persian invasion, which swept over Eastern Christendom under Sapor, must have supplied Mani and other Persian scholars with abundant opportunities of acquiring, through captives and through books, a knowledge of these doctrines. How much may have been disseminated in consequence of the sack of Antioch, it is no longer possible to determine; for the Persian records of that time have perished, and the fame of Sapor was unknown to later generations, except

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through historians of the empire which he filled with alarm.<sup>1</sup>

A few years before the birth of Mani, Persia had undergone a revolution which was not only political but religious. In throwing off the yoke of the Parthian kings, the Persians revived the ancient religion of their forefathers, the religion of Cyrus and of Darius Hystaspis. It was probably in consequence of this revival that the collection of ancient books, called the *Zend Avesta*, was formed : books of uncertain and various date, extending far beyond the period usually assigned to Zoroaster, their reputed author. This ancient Persian religion, identical in substance with that of the modern Parsees, has for its distinctive characteristic a belief in a dual government of the universe, a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness, represented by two gods, Ormuzd and Ahriman, between whom is waged eternal war. Like other nations, the Persians had their mysteries for the initiated, their popular worship for the uninitiated. Light and fire, which to the former were symbols of spiritual perfection, were to the latter objects of adoration. There were also sects which ignored the evil power Ahriman, devoting themselves to the worship of Ormuzd ; others erected temples to Ahriman, moved by a religion of fear, the essence of which was altogether deprecation of the wrath of a malevolent power.

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, x. ; Robertson, i. 133 ; Neander, i.

Mani appeared as the restorer and renovator of the dual religion of Zoroaster, which had become corrupted and obsolete. A prophet, a philosopher, and an artist, he brought forward alleged revelations, together with ingenious philosophical arguments, which he illustrated by paintings of his own. He claimed, like Montanus before, and Mohammed afterwards, to be endowed with the attributes of the Paraclete promised by Christ. The novelties of his doctrine offended the Magians, Persians of the old school, and raised against him enemies at the court of Sapor. He was put in prison, but escaped, and travelled to India and the far East, where he became acquainted with Brahman and Buddhist doctrines. In the reign of Hormisdas, Mani returned to Persia. The king, who had been his pupil, received him with favour, and declared himself a convert. His successor, Varanes, professed a disposition to inquire, and summoned Mani to a conference with his Magian adversaries, who denounced him as subverting the ancient religion. Judgment was given against Mani, and he was put to a cruel death, A.D. 277.

The ground of Manichæism, as it appeared in the eyes of other than Persian judges, was the same as that of the religion of Zoroaster: the dual principle of a division of the universe into two kingdoms, co-eternal if not co-equal. The opposition of good and evil was represented by that of light and darkness, spirit and matter, knowledge and ignorance. To the kingdom of light Mani



ascribed all that is spiritual or good ; to the kingdom of darkness, all that is material or evil. Matter was itself the evil principle, an active power militating against the spiritual principle of good. Light, as embodied in the sun, was the symbol and the habitation of God. In teaching his disciples to worship towards the sun, Mani was careful to explain that their object of worship was not the sun itself, which was only the seat and symbol of God's power, as the moon was of God's wisdom.

At Carthage there was still a latent survival of the old Phœnician worship of the sun and moon, which predisposed the people to receive Mani's doctrine with a hospitable welcome. Though the temples were no longer dedicated to Baal and Ash-toreth, but to Jupiter, Æsculapius, and Apollo, or to Venus, Juno, and Ceres, the more primitive ideas lay deep in the hearts of the native population. One of the principal temples of the city was called by an ambiguous title, the Temple of Cœlestis. Roman emperors of Syrian extraction, particularly Aurelian, gave their sanction to a revival of the worship of the sun. And now that the gods of Rome were tottering to their fall, pierced by the shafts of ridicule, and shaken by the blows of invective, the more discerning of the pagans saw in the worship of the sun a last stronghold in which they could fortify themselves against the aggressive strength of Christianity. The sarcasms of Tertul-lian, often repeated by other apologists, and familiar as household words upon the lips of

Christians, exposed the folly of worshipping images and deified men. The absurdity, the baseness, the moral depravity of heathenism, had been made so manifest before the close of the third century, that those who clung from prejudice to the old religion of the Roman people were in a forlorn case. Under such circumstances, there was ample scope for a new religion, the worship of a spiritual Being enthroned in the sun. This form of worship was unassailable by the arguments which were urged with crushing force against the worship of an image, cast in the furnace, representing some worthless human being called a deity. Manichæism was compatible with a high degree of spirituality, and yet it left the old temples and much of the old religious observances unmolested, as emblematical of abstract truths beyond the comprehension of vulgar minds.

Besides, there was in Mani's doctrine a specious resemblance to Christianity, which allured half-hearted and time-serving Christians. Christ Himself had been foretold as the "Sun of Righteousness." Mani professed to have assimilated into his system the essential elements of Christian doctrine. By a free and arbitrary treatment of the Scriptures, he produced from them testimony such as he wished. Words like those of St. Paul, "The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven," were susceptible of a Manichæan interpretation ; and were applied to illustrate the doctrine that Adam was the child of matter, the

offspring of the kingdom of darkness, whereas Christ was an emanation from the kingdom of light. The divine nature of Christ was unreservedly recognized by Mani; His human nature denied. Mani rejected the Old Testament, as belonging to the kingdom of darkness, though interfused with some stolen rays of light. Of the New Testament he took whatever gave sanction or coherence to his system, audaciously putting aside the greater part, excluding even the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

His account of the temptation of Adam and Eve is a curious example of his method of handling the Bible. He adopts the narrative, but inverts the lesson; for in his view the tempter who bids Eve to pluck the fruit of the tree of knowledge, is an angel of light, not of darkness. Thus the Fall is not to be deemed a fall, but a step upward, a divinely ordered ascent in intellectual progress. It follows, as a natural consequence, that the idea of atonement has no place in Manichæism.

Instead of the Christian doctrine of resurrection and judgment after death, Mani held the doctrine of transmigration of souls, according to a discriminating law, by which souls were to be born again in beasts or plants, their destiny being regulated by the life which they had led in human form. All life, vegetable as well as animal, was sacred to the Manichæans, a spark of the divine light imprisoned in matter.

To describe the fantastic details into which the

general principles of Mani were elaborated, would be superfluous. He classified the spiritual world, after the manner of the Gnostics and other Eastern philosophers, with as much precision as a naturalist would show in classifying the specimens under his hand in a museum. The followers of Mani added to his system modifications of their own. In the lapse of time, he himself received divine honours from them, and was associated with Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and the Sun, as the same Being under different names.<sup>1</sup>

What has been said will be sufficient to indicate the characteristic features of Manichæism, and its importance as a sign of the times, when it spread from Persia to Africa in the last quarter of the third century. Having several points of contact with the popular religion, especially at Carthage, with Greek and Oriental philosophy, and also with Christian revelation, it was perhaps the most plausible attempt which was ever made to reconcile the various religions of the world. But it encountered the bitter hostility of all who were in earnest for their own religion. Like other eclectic and syncretist systems, Manichæism satisfied no one thoroughly, and served only as a transitory halting-place for inquiring minds on their way from one belief to another. Its alien elements drove it from its home in Persia. Its Persian origin made it suspected at Rome; and the

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<sup>1</sup> Hardwick, *Christ and other Masters*, i. 32.

Christian Church condemned as heretical the Manichæan interpretations of Scripture. Distrusted on all sides, the Manichæans shrank to a philosophical school, living in outward conformity to the religion of their neighbours, sometimes as heathens, and afterwards as Christians, when Christianity became more prevalent. Among their secret disciples were found subtle-minded heathens and speculative Christians. In the higher class, called the elect, there was a high profession of ascetic purity.

The "seal of the mouth, the hand, and the breast," which was received by the duly initiated, signified a perfect restraint of sense, actions, and appetite. But in general, the Manichæan morals were stigmatized, with reason, as vicious. The kingdom of light, to which they aspired, was understood chiefly in an intellectual sense. Manichæism was a religion of refined culture, of philosophical enlightenment; and its later history adds to the many examples which show that the worship of light, however conceived, has little or no coercive effect upon the indulgence of animal passions.

The mixture of races in the mercantile population of Carthage was favourable to the reception of a mixed religion, and the city appears to have been one of the strongholds of Manichæism, both at first and afterwards.

Diocletian's edict against the Manichæans in Africa is preserved, and illustrates the spirit in

which the emperor wished to deal with religious questions.<sup>1</sup>

“The Immortal Gods have by their providence arranged and established what is right. Many wise and good men agree that this should be maintained without change. They ought not to be opposed. The old religion ought not to be reformed by a new one; for it is a high crime to meddle with that which has been once established by our ancestors, and has actual currency in the State.”

To leave things alone, not to disturb that vast religious fabric which was closely cemented to the polity of Rome, was the study of Diocletian. He was nevertheless aware of the incurable decay which was coming over the whole system. The ancient oracles became dumb. Sometimes the Pythoness, as at Delphi, proclaimed in plaintive tones that the presence of Christians, making the sign of the cross, put the oracle to silence. Diocletian left Rome, and fixed his residence at Nicomedia, on the eastern shore of the Propontis, where he reigned as a sultan, no longer encumbered by the republican forms of government which still were preserved at Rome, nor by the elaborate ceremonial of sacrifice which was still supposed to be necessary to propitiate the national gods.

Meanwhile the Church had rest for a period of more than forty years from the edict of toleration

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<sup>1</sup> A. D. 296, according to Neander, i. 200.

issued by Gallienus, A.D. 259. Nowhere was the increase of numbers and prosperity greater than in Africa.<sup>1</sup> The Christians, throwing off all concealment and precaution, began to build their churches in the most conspicuous places and in the most sumptuous style. When they assembled together for worship, it was no longer by stealth or with a sense of danger, but openly, and with exultation, anticipating an easy triumph over the decrepit religion of paganism. With this security came an alteration of temper, which in many cases degenerated into an easy and luxurious habit of life in the upper classes of Christian society. But the stern austerity of the days of Tertullian survived still; and there were not a few fanatics who grew fretful with impatience at having no opportunity of dying a martyr's death.

Two cases occurred in the army quartered in Africa, which aroused the languid energies of Diocletian. At <sup>2</sup>Teveste, in Numidia, a youth named Maximilian was brought before the proconsul as fit for military duty, and was led up to have his height measured, whereupon he said, "I am a Christian; I cannot serve."<sup>3</sup> The proconsul mildly explained to him that he might be a soldier

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<sup>1</sup> Milman.

<sup>2</sup> The letter T, or Th, which is prefixed to so many Numidian words, is thought by Hamaker to be a feminine prefix, similar to the Arabic Ts or T, which is in use among the Berbers at this day. See Hamaker, *Miscellanea Phœnicia*, p. 24, also p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 295. Neander, i. 202.



and a Christian at the same time—that, in fact, Christians were then serving in the emperor's body-guard. But he persisted in his refusal, and gladly underwent the sentence of death which was passed on him for refusing military service.

A more serious case was that of the centurion Marcellus, a few years later, at Tingis (the modern Tangiers).<sup>1</sup> The emperor, disquieted at the reports which he received concerning the state of feeling among the soldiers, ordered that they should sacrifice to the gods. Marcellus refused, saying, "From this moment I cease to serve your emperor as a soldier. Since the service requires the obligation of sacrificing to the heathen gods and to the emperor, I throw down my staff and belt, renounce my standard and military duty." He accordingly threw away his uniform, and was led forthwith to execution.

This was in A.D. 298, and about the same time two martyrs, Marius and Jacobus, suffered at Cirta ; but the idea of a general persecution of Christians, which was probably in the emperor's mind when he imposed the test of sacrifice on the soldiers, was not carried into effect until A.D. 303. In that year Diocletian, moved by the solicitation of Galerius, his colleague, issued an edict for the destruction of Christian churches, and for the seizure of the Holy Scriptures and Liturgies, which were to be burned. A second edict, issued soon afterwards, ordered the

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, viii. 4.

arrest of the clergy. A third required the prisoners to sacrifice, and directed new and ingenious tortures to be applied to compel them to obedience. A fourth edict embraced the people as well as the clergy, subjecting Christians of every rank to the previous edicts.

For the next ten years the whole power of the empire was directed to the suppression of Christianity. Diocletian's persecution was not only longer in its duration than those which had preceded it, but accompanied with circumstances of deliberate cruelty beyond former example. In the earlier persecutions, before the time of Decius, the Christians had been usually abandoned by the governors to the populace, who made sport of their sufferings for a public spectacle, which, however cruel, seldom lasted long. Decius had dealt more seriously with the Christians as rebels, and endeavoured to overcome their obstinacy by rigorous imprisonment and torture. But there was added, in the last persecution, a fury of desperation on the part of the persecutors which gave to their conduct a peculiar ferocity. Fear makes men more cruel than they naturally are; and the minds of the imperial rulers seem to have been possessed by the terrible thought, "We, or the Christians, must perish." They were striking their last blows against an enemy who was felt to be victorious; and when the flesh of their victims was lacerated with harrows, or scorched with slow fires, they read their own sentence of death—eternal death, as the Christians

often told them—in the unmoved countenances of the martyrs, as they passed one by one out of the reach of the tormentors.

Diocletian had made a partition of the empire with three colleagues, one of whom, Maximian, shared with him the title of Augustus; while two others, Galerius and Constantius, were styled Cæsars.

The province of Africa, together with Italy, formed the dominions of Maximian, who chose Milan for his seat of government. His disposition was hostile to the Christians, but he so far restrained his passions by a crafty policy, as to attempt to attach them to his cause against his rivals. This ambiguous conduct, of which there are later examples in the policy of several princes during the age of the Reformation in France and Germany, was continued by his son Maxentius.

The Christians of the East were suffering under Galerius the most horrible and protracted cruelties, some of which the historian Eusebius describes as an eye-witness, while the African Christians were allowed, with the connivance of the proconsul, to save their sacred books from seizure. Local circumstances, as well as the temper of the several rulers of the empire, made the persecution vary much in intensity at different places. Constantius, who governed Gaul, Spain, and Britain, was favourable to the Christians; and, though he submitted to the superior authority of Diocletian, he showed no zeal in carrying out the edicts. When Diocletian abdicated in A.D. 305, the persecution in the

dominions of Constantius appears to have ceased altogether. In Egypt and Syria, and other parts of the East, where the rulers, Galerius and afterwards Licinius and Maximin, were actuated by a bitter hatred of Christianity, the sufferings of the Christians were extreme. Rome also, the chief seat of paganism, was the scene of many martyrdoms at this time, among which those of St. Agnes and St. Sebastian are celebrated. But the African Church, for various reasons, experienced an alternation of severity and mercy, which had the effect of disuniting the Christian society, and left incurable wounds behind.

The stringent severity of the edicts of Diocletian spread dismay among the timid members of the Church, who were the most numerous. An incident which took place in Numidia, during the year 305, shows how much the bishops of that district had become demoralized soon after the outbreak of the persecution. The bishopric of Cirta, the principal city of Numidia, was vacant, and a synod of the neighbouring bishops, to the number of twelve, met together to fill up the vacancy. The senior bishop, according to the custom of the district, held the office of Primate of Numidia. This was the Bishop of Tigisis, Secundus by name, who opened the proceedings by an inquiry into the conduct of his colleagues. It then appeared that the majority of the bishops present, including Secundus himself, were charged with being traditors, that is, with having delivered up their sacred books in obedience

to the imperial edict; and several confessed the charge. Still graver accusations were made, and were not denied. One of the bishops, Purpurius, being accused of having killed two of his sister's sons, admitted the fact, and threatened to do as much for any one who interfered with him. The meeting grew so tumultuous that, to avoid further scandal, it was proposed that no more should be said of past offences, but that they should proceed at once to the election. Accordingly, Silvanus, one of the traditors, was elected Bishop of Cirta.

Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage, preserved the sacred books under his charge by an artifice which was more ingenious than dignified. He removed them to a place of safety, and substituted heretical books, which he gave up to the imperial officers. His deception was made known to the proconsul Anulinus, who was content to ignore it, and who seems to have acted throughout the persecution in a spirit of simple obedience to imperial orders, without using any closer inquisition or harshness than his official duty required. It is said that in some cases the magistrates, not without peril to themselves, hinted to the Christians that they might follow this example, if they pleased.<sup>1</sup>

But the conduct of Mensurius was denounced as abominable by the more fanatical of his fellow-Christians. He did wrong, they said, if his story were true; and they did not believe that he had

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 146.

made the alleged substitution, but that he was really a traditor. They held that he ought to have courted martyrdom, not have shunned it. The prisons were crowded with clergy and laity who had set the emperor's edict at defiance. In the excitement of the times, Tertullian's doctrine concerning martyrdom became more popular than ever. It was regarded as a baptism of blood, which washed out all sin, and gave assurance of salvation. Many who had fallen under ecclesiastical censure for misconduct, or who were weary of the world, made haste to terminate their wretched lives by a glorious death.

Mensurius set his face against this ostentatious provocation of the civil power. Following in the prudent course laid down by Cyprian, but without the sweetness of character with which Cyprian's severity was tempered, he forbade his people to court martyrdom, refused to acknowledge such persons as martyrs, and took measures to prevent the imprisoned confessors, who had thrown themselves in the way of persecution, from receiving visits. He had evidently before his mind the mischief which had arisen in the reign of Decius from the excessive influence which was gained by the martyrs and confessors.

The persecution had lasted till A.D. 311, with more or less of the cruelty which lay in the power of local governors or of a bloodthirsty populace, whose worst passions were let loose by the sanction of the Government, when the Emperor Galerius,

suffering from the pain of an excruciating disease, issued an edict of toleration, by which he hoped to propitiate the favour of the God whom the Christians worshipped. This imperial decree begins by stating that Galerius and his colleagues had determined, for the public welfare, to restore the ancient laws and institutions of the Romans, and for this end had required the Christians to worship according to the religion of their fathers; which purpose of the emperors had been frustrated by the wilfulness and folly of the Christians, of whom vast numbers had been subjected to danger, and many had endured death. Now, however, the edict concludes, "having a regard to our clemency and to our invariable practice, according to which we are wont to grant pardon to all, we most cheerfully have resolved to extend our indulgence in this matter also, that there may be Christians again, and that they may restore their houses in which they were wont to assemble, so that nothing be done by them contrary to their profession."<sup>1</sup>

Two years more elapsed before this edict of revocation was carried out effectually in the remoter parts of the empire. The savage Maximin, whose animosity to the Christians was stimulated by the counsels of Egyptian priests and magicians, prolonged the persecution in the East. "We were liberated from the punishment of death," writes Eusebius, with bitter irony, "by the great clemency

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, viii. 17.



of the emperors. After this, the executioners were ordered only to tear out our eyes, or to deprive us of one of our legs. Such was their kindness; so that, in consequence of this humanity of theirs, it was impossible to tell the number of those who had their right eye dug out with the sword first, and afterwards seared with a red-hot iron; those too whose left foot was maimed with a searing iron; and those who, in different provinces, were condemned to the mines, not so much to do work, as to suffer insult and misery.”<sup>1</sup>

The number of martyrs in the last persecution has been variously computed. Legends like that of St. Maurice and the Theban legion, who were said to have been put to death to the number of six thousand, for refusing to carry out the edict against their fellow-Christians, cannot be accepted as near the truth. Probably, however, an impartial estimate would raise the total of those who died under the hands of the executioner far above the number of two thousand, which is the lowest estimate.<sup>2</sup> It is to be observed that the number of persons who suffered death is no measure of the intensity of this persecution; for the design of the emperors, expressed in Diocletian’s edict, was not to kill them, but to torture them into submission. A comparison between the massacres of Alva in the Netherlands, and the last persecution of the Christians, shows a complete difference of policy in

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, viii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, ch. xvi.

this respect. The Spanish ministers of Philip II. resorted at once to slaughter, listening to the casuistry which said, "Slay bodies, that you may save souls ;" but the Roman despots had a more worldly eye to the advantage of keeping alive some of their most useful subjects, and moreover had a superstitious dread of making martyrs. They felt, with a sentiment based on religion and statecraft combined, that the death of their victims added to the number of an invisible host arrayed against them. The blood of the martyrs, as Tertullian had boasted long before, was a seed from which Christians sprang ; and therefore every death inflicted on the Christians represented a defeat to their adversaries. To hurt and not to kill them, to overcome their faith, to break their fortitude, to force them to the disgrace of recanting, and so to destroy their moral power as witnesses for Christ against the religion of Rome, was what the imperial officers studied. Considering the objects which they had in view, it is probable that the number of those who suffered mutilation and other injuries was enormously greater than that of those whose tortures were carried to extremity.

When at length this strange war of ten years came to an end, between the physical power to inflict pain, and the spiritual power to endure it, the victory of the latter was evident to heathens and Christians alike. The imperial might of Rome, which had subdued all the kingdoms of this world,

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was confessedly overmatched by a kingdom which was not of this world. The next step was that the visible fabric of the State should be reconstituted in harmony with the issue of this decisive conflict.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### BEGINNING OF THE DONATIST SCHISM.

THE episcopate of Mensurius at Carthage lasted to nearly the end of the persecution. In the year 311 he was summoned to Rome on the charge of refusing to give up to justice one of his deacons, who had published a libel against the Emperor Maxentius, and had taken refuge in the bishop's house. Maxentius showed a forbearance in this case, very unlike his usual violent conduct. He was at that time disposed to make friends of the Christians, and after examining Mensurius, he sent him back to his diocese. Nevertheless, the fatigue and agitation overtaken the bishop's strength, and he died on his way from Rome to Carthage. He appears to have been a man of considerable force of character, maintaining against all opponents the high position which he held as Primate of Africa, while he did not scruple to avail himself of craft in order to preserve the sacred books of his Church during the persecution. To the more fanatical Christians he was obnoxious, because of his severity

in restraining their superstitious love of martyrdom and martyrs. But a large share of his unpopularity for this cause was borne by his archdeacon, Cæcilian, who was accused of having employed men to stand at the prison doors, with whips, to prevent the friends of the martyrs from bringing provisions to them. It was even said that he had beaten some with his own hands, and that prisoners had been starved to death for want of the food which his cruelty had withheld from them.

Whatever may be the exact truth as to these accusations, they show the existence of a hot party spirit in the African Church, which burst into flame when Cæcilian was elected bishop in the place of Mensurius. Enemies rose against him on every side: the friends of the martyrs and confessors, who made up for scanty numbers by their clamour; disappointed rivals, who had hoped to gain the bishopric; and fraudulent guardians of Church property, into whose conduct he instituted a searching inquiry as soon as he had entered upon his office. A wealthy Spanish lady, Lucilla, took a leading part in this combination. Her dislike of Cæcilian was aggravated by the personal offence which he had given her, by reproving her for the practice of kissing a relic, the bone of a martyr, when she was about to partake of the Eucharist. Associated with her were two presbyters, Botrus and Celesius, who had hurried on the election immediately after the death of Mensurius, for their own ambitious plans; and there were also some

elders of the congregation to whom Mensurius had entrusted plate and other valuables belonging to the Church, before he went to Rome, all which Cæcilian, having obtained an inventory, reclaimed with unsparing strictness.

From the nature of the charges made against Cæcilian, it may be inferred that he was a man of hard and unsympathetic temperament, cold in repressing enthusiasm, warm only in enforcing discipline. Nevertheless, he had the support of the bulk of the members of the Church of Carthage. The men of sober and moderate judgment, who form the weightiest portion of a large city community, were with him. Against him was a triple alliance of superstition, ambition, and avarice, which was not likely to hold together without external aid.

He was strong enough, in his own energetic character, and in the general confidence of his flock, to overcome the faction in Carthage which was opposed to him, if he had them to deal with apart from the rural clergy. But the circumstances of his election had excited a widespread and passionate discontent among the other Churches of Africa. It had been somewhat precipitate, not by the fault of Cæcilian himself, but through the unsuccessful plans of his rivals; and the Numidian bishops, in particular, resented the slight which was put upon them, by the consecration of a new primate without any reference to them. Hitherto, they said, the Primate of Africa had always been

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consecrated by the Primate of Numidia. Now, Cæcilian had been consecrated by a comparatively obscure bishop, Felix of Aptunga. It was not difficult for the disaffected party in Carthage to fan the flame of offended dignity in the minds of the hot-tempered Numidian bishops. Seventy of them made their appearance at Carthage, headed by their primate, Secundus, to inquire into the charges which were made against Cæcilian. These charges touched his conduct in the persecution, and also the validity of his consecration. The Numidians had shown, in a recent election of their own, that they were not scrupulous in questions of discipline; but they listened eagerly to statements that Felix of Aptunga was a traditor, and that his consecration of Cæcilian was therefore void; that Cæcilian himself was answerable for the death of confessors who had been starved in prison. They proceeded to depose and excommunicate Cæcilian, who refused to acknowledge their jurisdiction, or to appear before them; though he offered to receive them, if they came to him, and to give them satisfactory proofs of the validity of his consecration. He was willing to submit to a fresh consecration at their hands, if they could prove any irregularity in that which he had received. "Let him come," exclaimed Purpurius, "to receive our imposition of hands, and we will break his head by way of penance."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xvi.; Robertson, i. 191.



Having excommunicated Cæcilian and all who acknowledged him as bishop, the Numidian synod laid hands on a bishop of their own appointment as successor to Mensurius. This rival bishop was a member of the household of Lucilla, and had formerly held the office of reader. His name was Majorinus. He seems to have been merely a puppet in the hands of the abler members of his party. The Numidians returned home, having satisfied their pride, and sufficiently asserted their claim to a voice in the affairs of the mother Church. To Carthage was left the calamity of a schism, which continually grew wider.

Rival bishops were ordained for many places in opposition to those who recognized Cæcilian, and Africa was divided between the two parties. The worthiest members of the Church rallied round Cæcilian. Many of the Christians of Carthage who were unfriendly to him before, saw with indignation the proceedings of his adversaries, and came to his support. He had on his side the greater part of the members of the city congregations, while an active minority, allied with the Numidians, denounced him and his as traditors.

During this time the whole province of Africa was suffering extreme distress in consequence of the ravages of Maxentius, who invaded the country to put down a revolt, and laid it waste with fire and sword. The emperor showed a savage jealousy of his rival Constantine, whose dawning reputation had already spread from Gaul to Africa; and the

citizens of Carthage, who were suspected of good will to Constantine, were punished by ruinous fines. All the fertile country round Carthage was devastated by the soldiers of Maxentius, and even the distant capital of Numidia did not escape. The miseries of civil war were felt by every class, but they appear to have pressed with peculiar severity upon the Christians, for in the year 313, after Constantine had defeated Maxentius at the famous battle of the Milvian bridge, he sent a large sum of money to relieve the distress of the Christians in Africa.

The failure of the last persecution had shown that the world was ripe for an able general to take the Cross for his standard, and seek the alliance of the Christians, in the party conflicts which arose out of Diocletian's division of the empire. Constantine, on becoming master of the West, issued an edict in their favour at once, which was speedily followed by another, restoring their churches and their confiscated property, to which his munificence added new and splendid gifts. The idea of Cæsars becoming Christians, which had appeared to Tertullian too absurd to be seriously entertained, was now on the point of being realized. Constantine was not as yet willing to declare himself a convert to the Christian faith ; but his favour to the Christians was already of a different kind to the capricious patronage of former emperors, such as Gallienus, who had first granted an edict of toleration to them. Moreover, he had shown signs

of a military and political ability, which gave assurance that his power to protect them was no less eminent than his good will. His advance from Gaul to take possession of Rome had more the character of a triumphal march than of a campaign, so rapidly did his enemies give way before him. The world saw in him, at the time of his accession, one of those heroic figures which stand out at intervals of ages, as landmarks in history.

Africa, while groaning under the tyranny of Maxentius, had given special offence by the erection of statues to Constantine. Both heathens and Christians were united for once in bidding welcome to a ruler under whom they could live at peace. But the distracted state of the African Church deprived its members of concord among themselves. When Constantine gave orders that a sum of money should be paid to Cæcilian for distribution, he ascertained that there was a party which refused to acknowledge Cæcilian as bishop. It became necessary to inquire into the matter, and after much correspondence with the proconsul Anulinus, Constantine resolved to summon Cæcilian to Rome, together with ten of his accusers and the same number of his supporters, that the case might be heard before an ecclesiastical commission; the principal members of which were Miltiades, Bishop of Rome, and the Bishops of Cologne, Autun, and Arles.<sup>1</sup> In taking this step, a precedent of the

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, x. 5, 6.

highest importance in the history of the Church, Constantine acted in compliance with the petition of the malcontents. At a later date, however, their party repudiated appeals to the civil power, as utterly unchristian.

The Council was held in the Lateran Palace, the residence of the Empress Fausta, in October, 313. Cæcilian was accompanied by ten bishops, and his adversaries were represented also by ten bishops, the most prominent of whom was Donatus of Casæ Nigræ, in Numidia, the title of whose see recalls the black huts of the wild Numidian peasantry. On the question immediately before the Council, the validity of Cæcilian's consecration, decision was given in his favour; but the schism appeared so widely spread and so formidable, that the Council endeavoured to restore unity by a compromise. The Bishop of Rome proposed that, wherever two bishops claimed the same see, the first consecrated should hold it, and that both parties should return to communion with each other.<sup>1</sup> The Numidians would not hear of this. They raised a violent clamour at the decision of the Council against them, denouncing the judges as corrupt, and denying the right of a synod of twenty bishops to reverse the sentence which had been passed at Carthage by seventy bishops. Finally, they appealed again to the emperor.

Constantine, anxious for peace, and perplexed by

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 192.

the difficulty of ecclesiastical questions, summoned a second and larger Council to meet at Arles in the following year. The choice of Arles was made to secure the utmost impartiality, as the bishops of Gaul had been comparatively exempt from persecution, and were not open to the charge of being traitors, which was raised by the Numidians, with or without reason, against any who took the part of Cæcilian. No less than two hundred bishops assembled at Arles in August, 314, under the presidency of the bishop, Marinus. They were brought together from various parts of Christendom. On all the great Roman roads men saw the unfamiliar spectacle of Christian bishops travelling at the imperial expense, to meet together in solemn council. A letter is extant in which Constantine commands Chrestus, Bishop of Syracuse, to take a public carriage and three servants, and meet the other bishops at Arles on the day appointed. Even the distant island of Britain sent three bishops.

At this great Council the judgment in Cæcilian's favour was confirmed. The bishops availed themselves of the opportunity to pass several Canons, which have been recognized ever since as final, upon some vexed questions of ecclesiastical discipline. One of these was the question of second Baptism, which had for a time separated the Church of Carthage from that of Rome in the days of Cyprian. Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, by whomsoever administered, was declared to be valid, and was not to be repeated. A more recent

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question which arose out of the last persecution, concerned the reception of traditors. The Council dealt with this question in a judicial spirit. Proof was to be required of the fact, from public records, and false accusers were to be excluded from communion. If it were clearly proved against any clergyman, that he had given up the sacred books or vessels of the church, or lists of the members of his congregation, to the imperial officers, he was to be deposed. But those who had been ordained by traditors were to be held as duly ordained.<sup>1</sup> The effect of these decisions was to strengthen the position of Cæcilian beyond further doubt. He was henceforth to be acknowledged by the Universal Church as the rightful Bishop of Carthage, and his opponents had before them the alternatives of submitting to a humiliating defeat, or of being condemned by the whole Church as schismatics, if they persevered in holding their separate meetings under separate bishops.

In their painful embarrassment, they appealed once more to the emperor against the decision of the Council of Arles. It was with much hesitation and reluctance that Constantine acceded to this request. He perceived by this time the obstinate temper of the Numidian party, which was not likely to yield to argument or to authority. Nevertheless, he consented to hear the case at Milan, in 316, and gave sentence in harmony with the judg-

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 192.

ment already pronounced by the Council. Having been led so far to interfere in the controversy, he followed up his decision by an order to the Proconsul of Africa to suppress the schismatics. He sent a letter to Cæcilian, informing him that Ursus, the lieutenant-governor under Anulinus, had received orders to pay a sum amounting to about twenty thousand pounds sterling for distribution among the clergy of the Catholic Church. He also requested him to report to the civil officers any cases which might come to his knowledge, of men endeavouring "to turn the people from the most holy Catholic Church," if he should see them "persevering in this madness."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the proceedings which followed the Council of Arles, Majorinus died; and his party, unmoved by the sentence which had been given against them, proceeded to consecrate a second schismatical bishop for Carthage. Their choice fell upon a presbyter named Donatus, who was called by his followers Donatus the Great, to distinguish him from the Bishop of Casæ Nigræ. His appointment, after the validity of the consecration of Cæcilian had been affirmed by the Council of Arles, finally separated his party from the Catholic Church, and they were known henceforward by the name of Donatists.

From the unfriendly notices of Donatus which have been preserved, it is evident that he was a

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, x. 6.



man endowed with an extraordinary measure of the qualities which are required in the leader of a sect. Of commanding and venerable presence, rigid in morals, learned, eloquent, self-confident, he was believed by his partisans to have the power of working miracles. They were reproached with singing hymns in his praise, and swearing by his grey hairs, as if he were more than human.<sup>1</sup> Instances of his pride were brought against him by his adversaries: that he desired his followers to assume the name of Donatists instead of Christians; that he was overbearing to his colleagues, and to all who opposed him. Indirect evidence of his character and abilities is supplied by the effects of his leadership upon his followers. He found them a mere faction, bonded together by no common sentiment beyond that of personal hostility to Cæcilian. Between the fanatical party at Carthage which had Lucilla for their patroness, and the traditors who had elected Silvanus at Cirta, there was no other bond of fellowship except that both, for different reasons, wished for Cæcilian's deposition. It was the task of Donatus to fix the principles of the party over which he presided, and in this task he succeeded. The influence of his doctrines consolidated the mingled elements of his faction into a sect, which endured as long as the African Church; and it was his lot, beyond this, to set an example unawares to sectaries of

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 194.

later ages. For, in fact, the principles of Donatus are those on which schism has been vindicated most plausibly, in every period of Church history.

His starting-point was the purity of the Church, both as a body and in its individual members. A Church which tolerated unworthy members in its communion was, according to Donatus, no true Church. Hence the Church Catholic, which had not cast out certain bishops who were believed, by the Donatists at least, to have been traditors, had forfeited its claim to the promises of Christ. The true Church consisted, as he held, of the elect who had not defiled their garments by base submission to the powers of the present world. The true Church was not, and could not be, in alliance with the secular power of the empire, and would be contaminated by any such alliance. To receive patronage, or alms, or protection from the State, was to resign the proper independence of the Church, as a purely spiritual body, a kingdom not of this world.

These principles were in glaring contradiction to the former conduct of the Donatists. It was they who had been foremost in making appeal to Cæsar, so long as there was any hope that Cæsar would give sentence in their favour. There were also some in their own body who, like Purpurius, were spots and blemishes to the society to which they adhered, more scandalous than the worst of their adversaries. But the Donatists found means to reconcile strict principles with lax practice in their

own case. For their friends and allies the past was easily forgotten ; for their enemies the remembrance of the past was indelible. If any of their own supporters brought scandal upon their society, they could disclaim him as a member, while accepting him as an auxiliary. The doctrine of an inner Church of the elect left room for a margin of associates, the exact position of whom could be left indefinite. Besides, the tests by which the faithful were distinguished were few and simple. Certain combative and ascetic qualities were their cardinal virtues, for the sake of which they were willing to condone much. Building on the immoral doctrine of the Montanists, that martyrdom atones for all, they made light of the duties and the charities of social life, in comparison with readiness to suffer death for their religion.

The Donatist schism was widened by the natural estrangement of classes in the mixed population of Africa. Between the merchant princes of Carthage and the inhabitants of the black huts of Numidia there was an alienation which the Christian faith had not altogether removed. A truly large-hearted man, like Cyprian, could win the sympathy of both classes. But men of narrower minds took part with one against the other. In the capital there were two parties : the ecclesiastical party, who upheld Church government, order, and discipline ; and the more emotional party, who looked to martyrs rather than to bishops as their spiritual guides. In the rural districts, among men of less

education and ruder manners, there was a jealous antagonism to the city of Carthage, increased by ancient feuds and differences of race. Probably it was not without disgust that the Christians of Carthage saw Numidian bishops assuming the right to overrule their election, and any antipathy of this kind would be felt still more deeply by the Numidians in return.

Thus, at the moment when the victories of Constantine seemed to bring peace to the Church, Africa was a prey to dissensions among the Christians. Two baneful germs were ripening fast, the Manichæan heresy in the upper classes, the Donatist schism in the lower. No two religious movements could be more dissimilar. Manichæism was a highly speculative and philosophical doctrine, composed of elements drawn from many different lands, rich and variegated with Oriental fancy as the products of an Indian loom. The Donatists, apart from the personal quarrel from which they began, represented one simple idea only, universal in its applicability to all lands and all times : the idea of a spotless Church composed of spotless members.

Before Manichæism or Donatism had attained to their full development, the African Church was disturbed by a third religious movement, an impulse from the wave of the great controversy which Arius had raised among the Greeks, and which, in the reign of Constantine and his sons, involved the whole Roman Empire.



## CHAPTER IX.

### CONSTANTINE.

By the Edict of Milan, which was issued in A.D. 313, by Constantine and Licinius, as joint emperors, Christianity was placed under the protection of the State. The property of the Christians which had been confiscated was given back to them, and the churches which had been destroyed were rebuilt at the public expense. In these measures Licinius yielded a formal and insincere compliance with the stronger will of Constantine, and evaded the edict in the Eastern provinces of the empire, which were under his rule, dismissing Christian officers, forbidding the clergy to meet, and showing his ill will to them in many ways.<sup>1</sup> But his defeat in A.D. 324 made Constantine the sole and absolute master of the undivided world, after a laborious career of fifty years, spent in almost constant warfare.

Constantine was bred in a camp, and saw military service on all the frontiers of the empire. He

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, x. 8.

fought against the Persians on the Euphrates, against the revolted Egyptians on the Nile, against the Goths on the Danube, and he was serving under his father against the Picts of Caledonia, when Constantius died at York, and the army hailed him successor to the vacant title of Augustus. He possessed in a high degree the virtues of a soldier: daring personal courage, consummate generalship, power to win the confidence of men and to rule them. With these qualities he had a soldierly frankness of character, and a certain humility, which led him to treat with deference those from whom he hoped to learn. He was not of a cruel disposition; and in general he showed the moderation and clemency which often accompany the consciousness of commanding ability. But he shed blood without scruple when political interest dictated the removal of a conquered rival; and his hasty anger caused a dark tragedy to be enacted in his own palace, of which his wife and son were victims. What specially distinguishes Constantine is a largeness and quickness of conception, which raises him above the level of the many successful soldiers whose talents have been simply military. Singularly bold in his ideas, and rapid in their execution, he had often cause to repent of the precipitation with which he issued orders; as, for instance, when he revoked at once all the laws of Licinius, and found it necessary to modify this promiscuous repeal.<sup>1</sup> His

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, xiv. note 113.

edicts were apt to be expressed in terms too strict and sweeping; and this excess of rigour was followed by an excess of indulgence when the error was discovered.

He was led to take particular interest in the affairs of the African Church, probably through the influence of the Christian Lactantius, whom he made tutor to his son Crispus. Lactantius, whose eloquent and graceful language seemed to belong to a purer age of Latinity than that in which he lived, and was compared to the style of Cicero, had studied rhetoric under Arnobius in the African city of Sicca. Both Arnobius and Lactantius were converted to Christianity in mature age, and wrote treatises in support of the Christian faith. They appear to have been more acquainted with the writings of philosophical Christians of the Eastern schools, than with the Holy Scriptures, which they quote but seldom. Arnobius, while vindicating the Christians from the charge of irreligion, and contending that the worship of one self-existent God is more truly religious than the worship of idols, takes a line of argument in his treatise against the heathen, which is in some respects independent. He disputes the immortality of the soul, and argues that the doctrine of a necessary immortality is not so strong an incentive to virtue as that of a conditional immortality.

Lactantius shows in his writings a leaning to Manichæan speculations, which has excluded them from the list of orthodox theological works, notwith-



standing the beauty of his style, and his valuable services to the Christian cause. The sympathy of Lactantius was evidently with Cæcilian in the Donatist controversy. Of some of the leaders on the other side he writes: "Men of a slippery faith they were, who feigning that they knew and worshipped God, but seeking only to grow in wealth and honour, affected the place of the highest priesthood; whereunto when their betters were chosen before them, they preferred to leave the Church."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever share policy may have had in first leading Constantine to associate himself with the Christians, he pursued this course with an earnestness which left no doubt as to his sincere conviction. It required no little self-abnegation for the autocrat of the civilized world, who was addressed by his heathen subjects as a divine being, to accept the discipline of the Christian Church, by which he was not admitted into the sacred order, but held simply the position of a lay defender of the faith. The reasons which delayed his baptism were apparently the same which in modern times lead men to delay the reception of Holy Communion: a reverence for the sacrament, and a superstitious fear of the consequence of sin committed afterwards.

In several instances the zeal of Constantine for Christianity outran his judgment, and was the cause of embarrassment both to the Church and the State. He wrote to the proconsul Anulinus to

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<sup>1</sup> Hooker, *Ecc. Pol.*, VII. xxiii. II.

exempt the clergy in his province from all public offices. The letter, which is given by Eusebius, runs thus: "It is my will that these men within the province entrusted to thee, in the Catholic Church over which Cæcilian presides, who give their services to this holy religion, and whom they commonly call clergy, shall be held totally free, and exempt from all public offices, to the end they may not be drawn away from the service due to the Divinity."<sup>1</sup> Improper use was soon made of this privilege. Men who were desirous of exemption from the burden of service as *decuriones* or members of the local senate, sought admission into the minor orders of the clergy, which was too easily granted. It became difficult to find men of the requisite property qualification to fill the civil offices. The emperor, therefore, issued another order to counteract the first, forbidding men to be ordained, who were qualified for the magistracy, and so restricting the clergy to a lower social rank.<sup>2</sup>

Constantine's benefactions to the Christians were so liberal that they operated as a bribe to conversion, and in some cases he is said actually to have made presents of money to converts on their baptism.<sup>3</sup> These injudicious acts lowered the standard of Christian life both in clergy and laity, and gave to the Donatist seceders from the Church a pretext for contrasting their own poverty and strictness with the wealth and laxity of their rivals.

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, x. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, i. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon.

Nor was Constantine well advised in his proceedings towards the Donatists. At first he commanded them to be suppressed, but he found that all the ardour of the martyrs was concentrated in this sect; and he shrank from instituting a persecution which they seemed eager to provoke.

In A.D. 321 the Donatists addressed a memorial to Constantine, in which they declared their fixed resolution to have nothing to do with "his scoundrel bishop." He forbore to tread in the steps of Diocletian, and revoked his own laws against them, recalling those who were in banishment, and saying that he left their offences to the judgment of God. His attempts at conciliation were as useless as those offers of indulgence which were made by Charles II. to the Covenanters of Scotland. What they had suffered only kindled in them an implacable spirit of resentment, and they carried out with increased confidence their doctrine, that they only were the true Church, rebaptizing their proselytes, and subjecting even infants to penance, when families seceded from the Church to them. Their progress is attested by many facts of this kind. Spreading over all the five provinces of Africa, they seem to have multiplied their episcopate so as to place a Donatist bishop alongside of every Catholic bishop; and in some places, particularly in Numidia, they had the country entirely to themselves. The inhabitants of the highlands of Numidia and Mauretania had never been tamed by the Roman conquest. As recently as during

the reign of Diocletian, five Moorish tribes had risen in revolt, and had been subdued with difficulty by Maximian, who erected forts in the remote valleys of the Atlas range to keep them in subjection.<sup>1</sup> Their fierce nature broke out through the restraints of their Christian profession, in those who joined the Donatist sect. Ready to bear martyrdom, they were no less ready to inflict cruel injuries on those whom they denounced as traditors, that is, on members of the Church Catholic, the communion of which they utterly renounced.

An enduring memorial of the interest of Constantine in African affairs is the city of Cirta, which he caused to be rebuilt and named after himself, Constantina : a name which it still bears, as the capital of a French province. It was a place of unusual military strength, which had long held out against Jugurtha, and was almost impregnable except by famine. Perpendicular cliffs, a thousand feet high, round the base of which a river winds, made Cirta, which is built upon the plateau above them, a natural fortress, inaccessible except on the western side. It was originally a Phœnician colony, and its name has the same Punic root as that of Carthage.<sup>2</sup> Under all the changes which the country has undergone, Cirta has been one of the last places to surrender to an invader.

Constantine's war against his colleague in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Hooker, *Travels in Marocco*, for description of the ruins of forts of this period.

<sup>2</sup> Gesenius, *de linguâ Phœnicid*, 422.

East led him to give his name to a more famous city. It brought to his notice the extraordinary advantages of the site on which he founded that new capital of the empire, which is called after him Constantinople. Licinius, defeated at Adrianople, took refuge in Byzantium, and made his last ineffectual stand upon the heights of Scutari. The position of Byzantium on the borders of Europe and Asia, its facility of approach by sea and of defence by land, its fine climate and noble harbour, have been appreciated by every generation since Constantine. It was not the less a stroke of genius in him to select that particular spot, and decree the erection of his capital there.

The transfer of the seat of government was full of importance in the history of the Church, being dictated in part by religious considerations, and having a lasting effect on the progress of Christian doctrine and organization. Rome was inseparably connected with traditions of the republic, and of the ancient heathen gods, to whom sacrifice had been offered on all the famous occasions of triumph under the republic. The emperor, while he received worship as a god, retained for his official titles the same which had been borne by republican officials. He was Consul, elected nominally by the people, and Pontifex Maximus, or High Priest. Emperor was originally a military title, given to generals of the republican army when on service. So Diocletian and others before Constantine, sick of these empty forms, chose a

place of residence far from Rome, where they could exercise their absolute despotism without the semblance of restraint. The local religion of Rome was an additional reason for Constantine to break new ground, to erect a new city which should have no associations out of harmony with a new religion : a city in which no Jupiter of the Capitol, or Mars, or Janus, or Vesta, should, by their deep-rooted superstitions, contend against the Divine Majesty of Christ.

Considerations of this kind had a share in the transfer of the seat of government to the shores of the Bosphorus. When the transfer actually took place, other results appeared, which had been less foreseen. The Western part of the empire felt at once the absence of the emperor ; for at the slow rate of ancient travelling, the difference was as great as if the capital of the British Empire were transferred from London to Bombay. At Rome itself the change was felt most of all. The bishop became the chief man in the city ; and by slow degrees the old imperial traditions clustered round the chair of the representative of St. Peter and St. Paul. He assumed after a while the incongruous title of Pontifex Maximus, which is to this day conspicuous as the papal designation on the monuments of Rome. At Carthage the change was considerable, but it took another form. Independence was fostered there also by the remoteness of the capital ; but the strength of religious independence at Carthage ran into dissent. The weak-

ness of the control of the imperial power, which left space at Rome for the establishment of a papal monarchy, was used at Carthage and throughout the African provinces to disintegrate the Church by schism. The Donatists grew more numerous and more violent. It was not long before they had a division among themselves; and a portion of the sect renounced the fellowship of their brethren. A body of fanatics, called Circumcellions, added another element of disturbance to the country. They were vagabonds who lived by begging from house to house, whence they derived their name; and were excited into a religious frenzy by the controversies of the time. They were illiterate, and spoke only the Punic language; yet they had the semblance of an ecclesiastical organization, their bishops and clergy, and their virgins vowed to God. Armed with clubs, because they held that swords were forbidden in Scripture, they spread terror throughout the country, their minds heated with the idea of doing battle for God, as "the Lord's champions." Their war-cry, "Praises to God!" was heard afar off with dread, for they refrained from no excess of violence and rapine.

Another result of the transfer of the capital of the empire to the East was the increased importance which was given to Eastern theological controversies throughout Christendom. In the year which preceded the foundation of Constantinople, while the plan was ripening in the emperor's mind, the first General Council of the Church was sum-



moned to meet at Nicæa, to define the Christian faith, especially with reference to the heresies of Sabellius and Arius.

Very few of the bishops of the West attended the Nicene Council. Rome was represented by two presbyters, who came instead of the aged Bishop Sylvester. Hosius of Cordova from Spain, Cæcilian of Carthage from Africa, were the only representatives of the great provinces to which they belonged. Nevertheless, their personal and official authority gave them a distinguished place among the 318 bishops assembled. Hosius has usually been supposed to have presided, and was first to sign the acts of the Council.

These began with a declaration of faith, which is the original form of that which bears the popular name of the Nicene Creed, though more exactly to be described as the Creed of Constantinople; for the whole was revised, and the final portion added, at the Council of Constantinople fifty-six years afterwards.

The Creed is followed by a sentence of anathema against those who say, concerning the Son of God, "There was a time when He was not," and, "He was not before He was begotten," and "He was produced from things that existed not, or of some other substance or essence," or that "He is subject to change or alteration." The doctrines here condemned were those which Arius had disseminated in the East by his pupils. He is said to have been, like Sabellius, a native of the Libyan Pentapolis, of

which Cyrene was the chief city. This district belonged to the Eastern division of the empire. Its inhabitants were Greek, and were connected much more closely with Alexandria and Egypt than with their Latin-speaking neighbours of Carthage. Hence it was not until after the Nicene Council that the African Church was affected by the Arian controversy.

The bishops assembled at Nicæa seized the occasion to determine several questions which had disturbed the Church, by the weight of their collective authority. One of the most pressing of these was the observance of Easter. It was felt to be an unseemly breach of Christian unity that some Churches should be celebrating the festival of the Resurrection of Christ on the same day on which others were still fasting in commemoration of His sufferings. The custom of the Churches of Asia, which kept the festival on the day of the Passover, was thenceforward disused, and the rule of keeping Easter on the first day of the week became universal.

Of the twenty Canons enacted by the Council relating to ecclesiastical discipline, the fourth appears to be designed to prevent any fresh occasion for contests like that from which the Donatist schism arose. It is as follows :—“ A bishop ought to be constituted by all the bishops that belong to the province ; but if this be not practicable, either through pressing necessity or the length of the journey, three must by all means meet ; and when

they have the consent of those that are absent signified by letter, then let them perform the consecration; and the ratification of what is done must be allowed in each province to the metropolitan." To establish unity and order in the Church, by removing differences which tended to schism, maintaining at the same time local customs undisturbed, was the general object of the Canons.

At first, Constantine had regarded the Arian controversy as an idle dispute, and he wrote an earnest letter to the Church of Alexandria, exhorting the Bishop Alexander and Arius to "return to the harmony which became their common faith."<sup>1</sup> But he soon found, to his bitter disappointment, that the division in the Church was much too serious to be healed by exhortations to peace. The resolution of summoning a Council was worthy of his imperial mind. It was one of those measures which, once taken, approve themselves to the common sense of mankind; but the taking of which, with all its practical difficulties and uncertainties, indicates a rare perception of the right method of ecclesiastical government. Then, having been instructed by the debates at Nicæa, having heard the storm of reprobation with which the theories of Arius were silenced by the assembly, Constantine began to understand the seriousness of the controversy, and with all the impulsive force of his character rushed to the opposite extreme. Well

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley, *Lectures on the Eastern Church*, p. 87.

aware of his own incapacity as a theologian, he relied on the opinions of his ecclesiastical counsellors with a child-like confidence. In consequence of the decision of the Council, he banished Arius and his followers, and ordered his writings to be burned. He was persuaded that Arianism was not properly a Christian doctrine, but a system of philosophy hostile to Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, however, he underwent a second change of opinion. His sister Constantia, who had been inclined to Arianism, appealed to him on her death-bed in favour of Arius. By her advice he consulted with some of the Arian clergy, who satisfied him that they held the true Catholic faith; that they, and Arius himself, were free from the errors imputed to them, errors with which they had no sympathy. Arius was accordingly recalled, and his powers of persuasion soon raised him to a high place in imperial favour.

Meanwhile the ablest opponent of Arius, the deacon Athanasius, had been raised to the vacant bishopric of Alexandria. Although he was absent at the time of the election, and was less than thirty years of age, his pre-eminent force of intellect and character marked him out as the fittest person for the office. He alone, of all the subjects of Constantine, was to be compared with the emperor in the qualities of a ruler of men; and his strength lay specially in that department where Constantine

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 207.

was weak : in the theological learning and acuteness that are required to guide the deliberations of Councils ; in the intense power of religious conviction that made him perfectly sure of the rectitude of his cause. Under him the genius of Constantine stood rebuked, as under the spell of a superior mind.

The Arians, who had the ear of the emperor, tried by many artifices to obtain the deposition of Athanasius, with little success, until in A.D. 336 they persuaded him that the Bishop of Alexandria had interfered with the export of corn from Egypt, on which Constantinople depended for its supply. Then, at length, the anger of Constantine was aroused, and he banished Athanasius to Trèves, the capital of the province of Gaul. A demand was made in his absence for the restoration of Arius to communion. This was refused by the Church of Alexandria ; and the whole weight of the emperor's authority was used at Constantinople to constrain the old Bishop of Byzantium, bowed down by the weight of nearly a hundred years, to revoke the excommunication of Arius. He had already consented, and Arius was on the point of being received back into the Church, under circumstances which would have raised him at once to a position of eminence, when the difficulty was solved unexpectedly. Arius, in the very hour of his expected triumph, died of a malady so sudden and terrible, that it appeared to be a special visitation of Divine wrath.

Constantine himself died a few months later, in the spring of A.D. 337. His conscientious sense of justice led him on his death-bed to recall Athanasius from exile. When he felt his end to be near, he sought the rite of Baptism, which he had deferred until then, and laid aside his imperial purple for the white robe of a candidate.

He was the first emperor to enlist himself under the banner of the Cross, as a soldier and servant of the crucified Son of God. Since his time, the example which he set has been followed by hundreds of emperors and kings, some of whom have exercised an authority not inferior to his, and have been no less eager for the reputation of faithful sons of the Church. Yet, of that great multitude of crowned heads, few can be said to have shown more sincerity in their allegiance to Christ. Comparing the actions of Constantine with those of Charlemagne, or of Charles V.—and two greater names can hardly be found—he is not inferior to either in the zeal with which he applied himself to the promotion of the welfare of the Church, while his zeal was at once more intelligent and more disinterested.

His gentle reproof of the irreconcilable Novatianist bishop, "Acesius, take a ladder, and climb up to heaven by yourself," indicates the penetration and the good humour of a mind which could preserve its balance in general, even under the intoxicating influence of despotic power. It would have been better for Constantine and for the world if those counsellors, who had the immense responsi-

bility of instructing him in the rudiments of the Christian faith, and guiding his ecclesiastical policy, had forborne to occupy his simple mind with speculative questions, which he was not qualified to entertain.

The theological controversies of his reign were inevitable. They formed part of the necessary development of Christian doctrine, which must present itself to every human mind sooner or later, in meditating upon the full significance of the Incarnation of Christ. But the excessive love of definition and disputation which prevailed among the Byzantine theologians, was apt to exalt Christian dogma out of all proportion to Christian life. If Constantine, in leaving Rome, had chosen Carthage instead of Byzantium for his capital, the ecclesiastical as well as the civil history of the world would have been changed, not more by a different course of events, than by a different scale in which those events would have appeared before the eyes of the world. The controversies of Africa bore chiefly on the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man and on the sacraments of the Church; whereas the controversies of the East bore chiefly on the essential attributes of Christ, and His relation to the other Persons of the Holy Trinity. The religion of Africa was mainly subjective and emotional, that of the Greek-speaking Churches mainly objective and intellectual. Both phases of Christianity were amply represented in the course of subsequent ages; but for the time the questions in which the African Church was



most interested were kept in the background, as local disputes, while the strife of parties at the capital excited an interest which was universal.

Notwithstanding the diversities of thought and sentiment among the different classes of the Christian community in Africa, there are certain marked features which give to African Christianity a special type of character. Independence, carried to an unusual length, gave occasion to a more than ordinary rigour of ecclesiastical discipline. Extreme reliance on personal religious experiences, and on the virtue of confessorship or martyrdom, was counteracted by a very emphatic assertion of the authority of the episcopate, and of the unity of the Church as a society. This conflict between the claims of spiritual life in the individual Christian soul, and the obligations of membership in the Christian society, is the most obvious characteristic of African disputes, whether Montanist, Novatian, or Donatist. Hardly less notable is the contempt of death and pain, which the African martyrs shared with others of the early Christians, but in a higher degree than most, perhaps than any. Another characteristic, which was more deep-seated in the African temperament, was an inclination to dwell on the mystery of God's plan of salvation, on original sin, and divine grace. Instances of this disposition are to be found as early as Tertullian,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian speaks of divine grace "being stronger than nature, and having subject to itself the free power of the will within us."—Kaye, *Tertullian*, p. 313.

and it comes to the forefront at a later period of the history of the African Church. The connection between the doctrine of original sin and predestination belongs indeed to a subsequent age. Of predestination there is nothing in Tertullian's writings.<sup>1</sup> The elect are simply the Christians, in his view, and the test of election is the practical test of perseverance. But the whole subject of the working of sin and grace in the soul, the efficacy of Baptism and of penance, has a remarkable prominence in African controversies, as compared with those of Alexandria, Antioch, and other Churches of the East. African theology was, in short, less philosophical and speculative, more practical and more human in its interests, than that of the Oriental Churches, even before the influence of the imperial court at Constantinople introduced a new element into theology.

There was much in the character of the African Christians which predisposed them to schism. In fact, the history of the Church in Africa is more concerned with party divisions than with doctrinal controversies. Nevertheless, this tendency to schism was to some extent restrained by the deep conviction, which they shared with the rest of Christendom, that unity was essential to the Church. Whatever divisions might arise, divisions were regarded by all as an evil. The necessity of ecclesiastical unity and fellowship was held in principle,

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<sup>1</sup> Kaye, *Tertullian*; Blunt, *Use of the Fathers*, p. 590.

both by those who adhered to the Catholic doctrine and discipline, and by those whose religious convictions led them to stand apart from their brethren in hopes of inducing them to admit their error. "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," are words continually on the lips of opposing parties. Strange to say, the question of rebaptism of those who had lapsed or seceded, was argued on both sides from this text. The Catholic rule of one Baptism, as affirmed at the Council of Arles, was the most natural interpretation. But when the successors of Cyprian, in deference to the general voice of the Church, accepted this interpretation, the African separatists clung to their national tradition, after Cyprian's own example, and maintained that they too held "one Baptism," which was their Baptism, counting any other Baptism as null. That is, the Catholic interpretation of the rule "one Baptism" was abstract: "One Baptism in the name of the Trinity, and no second Baptism." The Donatist interpretation, derived from that which was at first asserted at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 256, was specific: "One Baptism, namely, that of the true Church, and no other." Thus the principle of unity was vehemently affirmed in the midst of strife. Of the modern complacency with which schism is regarded, as an indifferent or even wholesome competition of rival societies, there is no trace in the primitive Church, even in Africa, where, if anywhere, it might be expected.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHURCH AFTER CONSTANTINE.

BEFORE the conversion of Constantine, the Christians formed a comparatively small part of the population of the Roman Empire. There were many causes to repel men from Christianity, and many more to deter those who were Christians at heart from making public profession of their faith. The Church consisted, not of all those who believed in Christ, but only of those who were ready to incur the peril of death or torture for their belief. Constantine's Edict of Milan enlarged the numbers of the Church by making Christianity safe. The timid could thenceforward act upon the faith which their conscience dictated, without reason to fear persecution.

Soon the example of the emperor, who paid marked respect to the bishops, counteracted the social disrepute in which the Christians had formerly stood. When he embraced the maimed confessors who had returned from exile, kissing their scars with every sign of affection and vene-

ration, the heathen world learned to alter its contemptuous mode of regarding their religion. A very short time elapsed before the leaders of fashion in the world, following the example of the emperor, declared their conversion. A stream of proselytes set in with increasing volume, until the Christian inhabitants of the cities predominated over the heathen, and began to treat them as a minority, applying to them the name "pagani," or villagers, as if heathenism had become a religion of rustics only.

This great change was spread over a period of a century or more. It is computed by an author, whose knowledge of the state of the empire is unquestionable,<sup>1</sup> that no more than "a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the Cross before the important conversion of Constantine." At Rome, the population of which was at least a million, the clergy consisted in the time of Cornelius (A.D. 251) of a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters.<sup>2</sup> "The number of widows, of the infirm, and of the poor, who were maintained by the oblations of the faithful, amounted to fifteen hundred. From reason, as well as from the analogy of Antioch, we may venture to estimate the Christians of Rome at about fifty thousand."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, vi. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon, ch. xv.

Carthage, in the fourth century, had risen almost to the height of its revived prosperity, and the city, so far as we can judge by the traces of ancient buildings, covered the whole peninsula which was enclosed by the ancient wall, a space not less extensive than Rome, though probably much less densely inhabited. From the various indications which we have in the remains of Carthage, as well as from the verses of Ausonius, in which he says that Carthage scorned to be reckoned third among the cities of the empire,<sup>1</sup> we may estimate the population of Carthage at half a million or more. There are many reasons for supposing that the Christians in Carthage were more numerous than those in Rome.

In the relations between the two Churches there is an apparent footing of equality, which is best explained by the supposition that the superior dignity of the imperial city was counterbalanced by superior numbers in the provincial capital.

The writings of Tertullian give a more favourable picture of the progress of the Church in Africa than we have of any other Church; and the circumstances of the martyrdom of Cyprian show a carefulness on the part of the proconsul to avoid the danger of a tumult: a danger which the conduct of the Christians before and afterwards proved to be serious. It seems to be not unlikely that Carthage may have contained, at the accession of

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<sup>1</sup> Ausonius, *Carmen* 286. See Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, "Carthago."

Constantine, as many Christians as Antioch contained seventy years later, that is, a hundred thousand, or one in five of the population. But, if so liberal an estimate may be assumed, it leaves four-fifths whose religion was based on blind custom, or the tradition of their forefathers, or the desire of present happiness, or the gratification of sentiment and æsthetic taste, or some other principle which took the side of heathenism, until by degrees new customs, traditions, hopes, and sentiments, formed under Christian influences, turned the scale.

In bringing about this revolution, the personal authority of the emperors was of immense weight. No parallel in modern times—not even Henry VIII. or Louis XIV.—is nearly sufficient to illustrate the religious awe with which the emperor was invested. Worshipped as a god, even in his lifetime, he was supposed to have unlimited power to dictate the religion of his people.<sup>1</sup> If it were known to be his will that men should worship Christ, loyal subjects would do so, not inquiring further, but merely worshipping as the emperor bade them. Thus Christianity became, in some measure, a State religion from the moment when Constantine declared himself a convert. So completely had the imperial system penetrated the very soul of the Roman people, that many were content to obey with alacrity whatever edict the sovereign might issue

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<sup>1</sup> See Merivale, *Romans under the Empire*, v. 396, etc.



in reference to public worship. Religion for them involved no question of truth or falsehood. Holiness and goodness did not enter into the idea of religion, as entertained by the servile multitude who formed the bulk of the people. To submit to the prince and please him was the supreme rule of life.

The earlier Christians, who had passed through the trial of persecution, found their assemblies frequented by men of a very different stamp, and the new proselytes began to exercise a baneful influence on the faith and morals of the whole body. A lower standard of holy living, a disposition to import heathen ideas and habits into Christianity, was a natural consequence. One of the signs of this corruption of faith was the increase of a superstitious reverence for relics, which was greatly promoted by the influence of the empress-mother, Helena. Acts of devotion such as that which Cæcilian reproved in Lucilla became more and more prevalent, and the ministers of the Church relaxed their disapproval, if they did not give positive sanction to them. When Constantine caused the holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem to be sought out and restored, relic-worship and pilgrimages received an encouragement from the civil power which was not opposed by the clergy, and the tendency of the spirit of the age was to regard these outward religious acts as not only legitimate, but laudable and meritorious. At the same time, the building of churches, rendered

necessary by the increase of converts, was carried out with a magnificence in harmony with the altered position of the members. Constantine exerted himself to promote skill in architecture, and wrote a letter to Africa, in which privileges were offered to young men who would apply themselves to the study.<sup>1</sup> How much the character of the Christian society was altered when questions of architecture, ornament, and ceremonial came to the front, and the protest of the Church against the world grew fainter, it is possible in some degree to imagine; but the most vivid picture drawn by imagination would hardly represent the fact.

Constantine endeavoured, with a magnanimous wisdom, to leave the Church to the free administration of her affairs. But his sincere wish to promote Christianity led him to interfere by donations, which were not without injury to the best interests of the Church; nor was it possible for a despotic sovereign to confer real independence on a large and militant society within his dominions. He exercised of necessity a strong force in the direction to which his will inclined, and had only the choice between being a powerful friend and being a powerful enemy. What was beyond the ability of Constantine was still more beyond that of his successors. With less judgment and less magnanimity, they took a decided part in theological disputes, and without meaning ill did incalculable harm.

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, ii. 236.

The protracted continuance of the Arian controversy after the Council of Nicæa, was owing in a great measure to Court influence, first under Constantine, and in a still greater degree under Constantius. At that Council the judgment of the Church was honestly sought, and was given emphatically, in a form which the deliberate reflection of later ages has confirmed through all the many shocks and tempests which the Christian faith has undergone. Arianism was condemned as heresy, and might not improbably have subsided into the same obscurity as the opposite error of Sabellianism, had not party spirit in the Church been inflamed by the action of the Government. Court intrigues brought the Arian leaders back from exile; and when it was known that the emperor looked on them with favour, an Arian party was formed in those cities which were most obsequious to the imperial will. Thus the deepest questions of theology were involved with the rivalry of court factions. While the more independent cities adhered to the Nicene faith, Arianism revived under the patronage of princes whose favourites were Arian. For nearly the whole period of thirty-eight years, between A.D. 342 and A.D. 380, the see of Constantinople was held by Arian bishops. Attempts were made again and again to appoint an Arian to the see of Alexandria; but the people refused to acknowledge any bishop in the place of Athanasius; and his indomitable energy, whether in his diocese or in exile, waged for forty-six years

an equal war against all the power of his adversaries.

North Africa was removed, both in place and in sympathy, from the circle in which the Arian controversy raged most fiercely, though it was necessarily touched by an agitation which disquieted all Christendom for more than fifty years. Arianism, in its original form, was marked by characteristics of the Greek mind, and bore some resemblance to that plastic genius of the Greeks, by which in their works of art they were accustomed to bring down the Divine nature to the level of ideal humanity. Arius had a mind logical and rational rather than profound or reverential. He was not aware, apparently, of the divergence of his doctrine from that of the Church, when he expressed it thus: "Having determined to create us, God made a Being whom he named Word, Wisdom, and Son, in order to create us by Him."<sup>1</sup> But there was in this conception an affinity with the higher sort of heathenism, with its demigods in human form, which attracted the large and growing class who began to profess Christianity without having utterly renounced heathen ideas. In the previous age, those who became converts were apt, in their repugnance to their former superstitions, to fly to the opposite extreme, abhorring all that was associated with

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<sup>1</sup> Neander says, "The idea of a becoming without a beginning, a derivation in essence and not in time, was to the feebly speculative and feebly intuitive mind of Arius something too subtle and refined, something incomprehensible, self-contradictory."—*Ecc. Hist.*, iv. 4.

idolatry. But now, since the emperor had taken part with the Christians, the process of conversion was attended with less agonizing spiritual conflicts ; and to those who were converted under these circumstances, Arianism presented itself as a popular and intelligible form of Christianity.

The want of depth in the speculations of Arius was concealed by the skill with which he employed various acts of popularity. He obtained immense influence among the female members of the Church at Alexandria ; he wrote a collection of songs for sailors, millers, and pilgrims, in which he availed himself of popular tunes to fix his sentences in their memory ; and at the same time, he gained the ear of the emperor and his family. That these should have been favourably inclined to Arianism, is quite natural. Untrained in the study of the Holy Scriptures, unpractised in the habits of religious devotion which contribute no less than study to form a Christian mind, the imperial household saw no important difference between the Catholic faith and that of Arius, except that the latter was more easy to apprehend. On the surface his doctrine appeared to be simpler ; but this apparent simplicity disappeared in the process of controversy, when the Arians divided into three or more parties : the genuine followers of Arius, who asserted an essential difference in nature between the Father and the Son ; the semi-Arians, who drew so near to Catholic doctrine that their only objection to the Nicene Creed was the word

*Homoousios* ("of one substance"), for which they desired to substitute *Homoiousios* ("of like substance"); and between these two parties was a third of less defined views, inclining sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, as expediency seemed to dictate.

The course which Athanasius took, as the head of the great body of earnest and devout Churchmen, who had been tried in the furnace of persecution, was without compromise. What others felt with the intuition of fervent Christian piety, Athanasius was able to expound with a controversial acuteness, which none could resist who was competent to understand his arguments. He saw in the iota which was added to the Creed by the Homoiousians, the insertion of a mere point, which would broaden like a wedge to separate the First and Second Persons of the Holy Trinity. It was a claim on the part of human reason to go beyond the nature of the Son of God, though that nature was acknowledged to be Divine.

The large mind of Athanasius, severely disciplined, and stored with a familiar knowledge of Holy Scripture, regarded Arianism and Sabellianism as two imperfect aspects of the Christian faith, each one-sided. Sabellius had fixed his attention on those passages of Scripture which revealed Christ as the Word of God, ignoring His Sonship. Arius had fixed his attention on those which revealed Christ as the Son of God, ignoring or explaining away whatever he could not logically

reconcile with the idea of Sonship. He had come forward at first as an opponent of Sabellianism, and there were several among the partisans of Athanasius who inclined to that error. But Athanasius himself held a course not simply between but above the two heresies, taking in his comprehensive view the partial truth of both, and combining a calm intellectual moderation with fervid spiritual enthusiasm.

While the cities of Alexandria and Constantinople rang with the Arian controversy, so that the sacred questions involved became common topics at the baths and in the streets, Carthage and the other cities of North Africa adhered firmly to the Catholic faith. The Donatists, far from allying themselves to the party of Arius, took an extraordinary step, immediately after the Council of Nicæa, to show their fellowship in doctrine with the rest of the Church. A synod of Donatist bishops, to the number of two hundred and seventy, met at Carthage in the year 328, and resolved to admit Catholics to communion without requiring second Baptism.<sup>1</sup> The fear of isolation from the Universal Church prevailed for a time over their antipathy to those whom they persisted in calling traditors, the adherents of Cæcilian.

The death of Cæcilian appears to have taken place about A.D. 343. Those who stood by him most loyally, as an injured man and a legitimate

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, ii. 232.



bishop, had but little personal affection or veneration for him, as we may gather from the faint praise of Augustine. "We commemorate his name as that of a brother, not a father or mother. If you wish to hear my judgment of him, I think him innocent and falsely accused. Still, I think of him as one man may think of another."<sup>1</sup> He was followed by Gratus, who attended the Council of Sardica with thirty-five African bishops, and took the part of Athanasius.

In A.D. 353, when Constantius became sole emperor by the death of the successors of his brother Constans in the West, Arianism spread to Italy, but gained little footing in Africa. The Arian party made much of the fact that four African bishops subscribed the semi-Arian Creed of Sirmium in A.D. 358. In the following year Restitutus, Bishop of Carthage, who had succeeded Gratus, attended the Council of Rimini, and, like many others, was led to sign a Creed which did not adequately express his convictions. What Jerome said of the Christian world in general was specially true of Restitutus. He "groaned, and wondered to find himself Arian." On becoming aware of the error into which he had been misled, he lost no time in declaring his loyalty to the Creed of Nicæa.

Athanasius wrote a letter to the African bishops in A.D. 368, to warn them against the Arian Eunomius, who had been banished to Mauretania, and to

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, ii. 231.

exhort them to hold fast the faith as defined by the Nicene Council. But the presence of Eunomius in Africa had no effect in disturbing the peace of the Church, which was at this period occupied almost entirely with local questions.

The Emperor Theodosius, immediately after his baptism in A.D. 380, restored the churches of Constantinople to the Catholics, and a General Council, which was held in the city in the following year, affirmed the Nicene Creed, with the addition of clauses relating to the nature and operation of the Holy Spirit. By the acts of this Council, which were accepted by the whole empire, the Arian controversy was virtually concluded.

Meanwhile, however, the doctrines of Arius were making rapid progress in another quarter, whence they were to be introduced into Africa at a later time. Ulphilas, the great missionary of the Goths, was ordained bishop at Constantinople about the year 360, when the Arian Creed was set before him to subscribe by the Arian bishops who enjoyed the favour of the Emperor Constantius.<sup>1</sup> A plain man, intent on Christian civilization more than on controversies, he taught his savage converts what he had learned at Constantinople. His abilities as a teacher, and also as a negotiator between the Goths and the emperor, were so remarkable, that Constantine used to compare him to Moses. There is no reason to suppose that his acceptance of

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iii. 178.

Arianism was the result of any studious comparison of doctrines; but rather that he took without question what was laid before him for truth by more learned men, who, after the Nicene Council, took pains to hide as much as possible their points of divergence from the Catholic faith. In consequence of the labours of Ulfilas, Christianity spread along the banks of the Danube among the German tribes; and when they afterwards came in contact with the Western provinces of the empire in Europe and Africa, the antipathy springing from difference of creed added to the other miseries of war.

A sign of the material prosperity of the African Church during the reigns of Constantine and his sons, may be seen in the prohibition to the clergy of lending money on usury, by a Council of Adrumetum, A.D. 344.<sup>1</sup> It was found necessary to condemn the avarice of some of the clergy at a later Council in A.D. 370. Nevertheless, the general character of the African clergy was so high that three were elected as bishops to dioceses in Gaul about this time. At a synod held at Carthage, A.D. 349, one of the Canons, the tenth, enacted that bishops should not encroach upon the dioceses of their neighbours—a rule which apparently presupposes a territorial division into dioceses.

The Donatist schism continued, nevertheless, to be, with some fluctuations, an incessant cause of discord and anxiety. Constantine, having made

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.

proof of the determined fanaticism of the Donatists, tried the effect of forbearance, and persevered in this course with admirable clemency, in spite of their violent conduct. When he rebuilt Cirta, and renamed it after himself, he found the Donatists in possession of all the churches.<sup>1</sup> The Catholics made petition to him for a place of worship, and he complied by building a new church for them, which the Donatists destroyed. Nevertheless, he refrained from punishing the rioters; and ordered the church to be built again, at his own expense.

His son Constans tried to conciliate the Donatists by offers of money, ostensibly for the relief of the poor. He also issued a letter, in which he invited them to return to the unity of the Church, saying, "Christ loves unity, therefore let there be unity." On their refusal, he lost patience, and sent soldiers to disperse their meetings for worship. The imperial troops fell upon the Donatist congregation of Siciliba while they were in their church. Many lives were lost, including that of the bishop, Honoratus, who was thereupon honoured by his brethren as a martyr. The day of his martyrdom was observed as a festival, and its anniversary was an occasion for inflammatory sermons and riots. The proconsul Gregorius, a count of the empire, attempted to pacify the sectaries, and was reviled insolently by Donatus. In A.D. 347, Constans made another

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli; Neander, iii. 274.

attempt at pacification, sending two officers of high rank, Paulus and Macarius, to give alms to the Donatist poor, and donations of plate for their churches. Donatus rejected the latter with disdain. "What has the emperor to do with the Church?" he asked; and he bade his followers to endure poverty rather than accept the emperor's money. The sermons preached by him and other leaders of the sect excited the ignorant poor to fury. Contrasting their poverty and independence with the condition of those members of the Church who looked to the favour of princes for worldly gifts, they fed their hungry disciples with the doctrine that the emperor's invitations to unity and peace were allurements of Satan.

It is to this time, probably, that the worst excesses of the Circumcellions belong. Rising in a servile revolt under two leaders of their own class, Fasis and Axid, they dismayed the peaceful inhabitants of the rural districts, and for a time kept the imperial arms at bay. Africa was subject to occasional seasons of great distress. Its usual fertility was sometimes checked by drought; and sometimes the harvests fell a prey to swarms of locusts. At such seasons the peasantry became desperate and dangerous, easily incited to outrage. A portion of the Donatist party endeavoured to moderate the violence of the Circumcellions; but Donatus himself encouraged them. The prevailing distress and social grievances which combined with their religious fanaticism, are shown by

their demand for a remission of all debts and the emancipation of all slaves. They announced their readiness to avenge any slaves who might feel themselves injured by their masters. If a master and his servant fell into their hands, they made them change places, and imposed base offices of drudgery on any men of high rank and venerable age who were so unhappy as to be captured by them.

The government of Constans was compelled, though unwillingly, to put forth its strength to suppress this insurrection. Much blood was shed before the Circumcellions, though carrying no weapons but clubs, were dispersed by the Roman soldiers. Their contempt of death was almost without parallel; and they continued to disturb the country, breaking singly into temples and courts of justice on purpose to provoke martyrdom. Many flung themselves from precipices. Some stopped travellers on the highways with furious threats, demanding to be put to death. "Kill me or I will kill you," was the alternative on which they insisted. Cases occurred in which the traveller's presence of mind outwitted them. As the Circumcellion offered his neck to the blow, his intended executioner proposed first to bind his hands and eyes; and having done so, left him unharmed and harmless.

Donatus was so deeply implicated in the revolt that he was banished. But he returned from exile on the accession of Julian, who showed favour

during his short reign to all who opposed the Church, and forgave the Donatists their Christian faith, for the sake of their animosity to the Catholics. He restored to them, on their petition, several places of worship of which they had been deprived, and which had since been used by their Catholic neighbours. Nothing shows more vividly the extreme bitterness of their hostility than the manner in which they treated these buildings. They scraped the walls, washed the floor, burned the altars, and destroyed the sacred vessels, as polluted by use in Catholic worship. In some instances, coming suddenly into possession, they found in the churches, from which the clergy had hardly time to escape, the consecrated bread of the Eucharist. Even this was to them an abomination, and they cast it to the dogs. A Catholic bishop, Optatus, who describes these particulars, adds that the dogs went mad and bit them.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Emperor Valentinian, who was elected at the beginning of the year 364, a general toleration prevailed. But a formidable rising of the Moors under Firmus, the most powerful of the native kings, combined with a revolt of the oppressed cities of Tripolis, filled the provinces of Africa with war in the latter years of Valentinian's reign. Theodosius, father of the great emperor of that name, reconquered Africa, which had almost shaken off the imperial dominion. In this war the

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.



Donatists had taken an active part on the side of the Moors, and they were severely punished when order was restored. Gratian, who succeeded Valentinian as Emperor of the West, regarded them as rebels, and forbade their worship under penalties, notwithstanding which the sect lived on.

The Donatist schism, though it had its origin in the persecution of Diocletian, and would in any case have been a difficult problem for the rulers of the Church, was much exasperated by the unwise and vacillating policy of the emperors. There was much indulgence shown to the Donatists at one time and much harshness at another; but the indulgence was not enough to conciliate, nor the harshness enough to intimidate them. On the contrary, they perceived truly that the emperors were afraid to press to extremities a conflict with an army of martyrs. Defiant, and confident in their claim to be the true Church of the Apostles, they gloried in their antagonism to the secular power, and reproached the Catholics with the imperial favour which they enjoyed, as a sign of estrangement from the favour of God. Nor can it be said that their charges, however exaggerated, were altogether groundless. The sudden alliance of the Church and the State led to compromises both in faith and morals, which required a stern protest. Of the baneful influence of the imperial court on the purity of Christian faith, the spread of Arianism is an illustration. Of the lowering of moral tone through the interfusion of the Church and the world there

are many evidences: the unblamed introduction of relic-worship, the increase of luxury and avarice in the Church, and particularly among the clergy. Paganism, wounded to death, gave to its conqueror a parting gift like that of the centaur in the fable: a poisoned robe, which clung to the body, and could not be torn off without almost mortal agony.

While there was a growing danger to the purity of Christian faith and morals through the hasty alliance between the Church and the Roman Empire, an ascetic movement sprang up in the deserts of Egypt, which had for its primary object the counteraction of a worldly spirit in the Church. No book, perhaps, was ever written, of which the consequences were more momentous than those which followed the biography of the hermit Anthony, written by Athanasius. The authority and eloquence of the great Bishop of Alexandria commended to all Christendom the example of the venerable anchorite, whose life was prolonged for 105 years, from A.D. 251 to A.D. 356. During his lifetime, Anthony's fame reached the ears of Constantine; his rare visits to Alexandria excited among the inhabitants no less commotion than the visits of an emperor; and many followers imitated him both in Egypt and Palestine. After his death, the influence of his example spread more widely. Basil introduced monasticism into Asia Minor. Martin, who had met with Athanasius in banishment at Trèves, was the founder of monastic life in Gaul. An indirect

result of the spread of the ascetic spirit, which led men to forsake the world, and live in solitude as hermits, or in cœnobite brotherhoods, was the severance of the clergy from family ties. Celibacy, which had long been held as meritorious, began to be regarded as obligatory. At a Council of African bishops held at Carthage in the year 390, to regulate certain questions of ecclesiastical discipline, the celibacy of the clergy was the chief subject of discussion ; and the Council resolved that it should be enjoined on all bishops, priests, and deacons.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in proportion as the vow of Baptism lost its significance, through laxity of manners, new and more stringent vows were introduced to separate the Church from the world. Asceticism took the place of martyrdom. Mortification of the flesh was a substitute for the shedding of blood, among those who were resolved to devote themselves, soul and body, to the service of Christ in the war with the spirits of evil. The nature of that spiritual conflict, and the form in which it presented itself to men of the fourth century, is exhibited to us with singular clearness in the life of an African bishop, who is equally an object of interest, whether he be considered as a representative of his age, or as one of the luminaries of the Universal Church for all time—the great Augustine.

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.



## CHAPTER XI.

### AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO.

IN the year 391, Valerius, Bishop of Hippo Regius, in Numidia, requested his people to elect a co-adjutor, to assist him in the discharge of his duties, to which he felt unequal from his advanced age and infirm health. The people at once presented Aurelius Augustinus, who was leading a secluded life at Hippo, but was famous, both in Africa and Italy, for his splendid talents and earnestness of character. Against his will, Augustine was compelled to receive priest's orders, and take a share in the episcopal duties by preaching.<sup>1</sup> It was not long before the bishop, with an irregularity of which he was unconscious,<sup>2</sup> obtained consecration as bishop for his colleague, and retired from active duty. The circle of Augustine's influence spread wider and wider. Hippo, although it was two hundred miles from Carthage, became, under its new bishop, the real centre of ecclesiastical activity

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 399; Neander, iv.

<sup>2</sup> See the eighth Nicene Canon.

to the whole African Church. At a later period of his life, the authority of Augustine was held superior to that of any other man, in controversies which extended from the monasteries of Britain to those of Syria. Moreover, his reputation since his death has been as enduring as it has been extensive. The schoolmen of the Middle Ages, the German and French Reformers of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits and the Jansenists in the seventeenth century, dissimilar and often opposed in their theological tenets, are united in their tribute of veneration to Augustine, and contend for his testimony in their favour with a jealous rivalry, to which there is no parallel in the case of any other writer since the Apostles.

Augustine, at the time of his ordination as presbyter, was thirty-seven years old. He had been educated as a rhetorician, the same profession which Cyprian, and perhaps Tertullian, had followed before their conversion. In the circle of ancient studies the art of oratory held a more definite place than has been assigned to it since the invention of printing. The scarcity of books, and the habits of living in public which a Southern climate fosters, developed the faculty of speaking much more than that of writing. Instruction was chiefly oral; much of what was written was composed with a view to oral delivery; and the profession of an orator or rhetorician comprised much more than the name implies. As in modern times a man of letters is not a mere grammarian, nor literature

merely grammar, but a comprehensive term including poetry, history, and philosophy, expressed in a literary form, so in the Roman Empire the study of rhetoric included all knowledge that could be recast in an oratorical form. A teacher of rhetoric was a man of the highest and most varied culture.

Augustine's voluminous writings have, for the most part, the vivacity of spoken discourses. Few men have had in such abundance the power to speak and to write. His learning was inferior to that of one or two of his contemporaries, but its shortcomings were made up by the extraordinary penetration of his intellect. His literary style has not the classical idiom of Cicero or even of Lactantius, yet it possesses a felicity of its own, rich in the eloquence of strong emotion, and in pointed antitheses which take a firm hold of the memory. His ingenuity and vigour in controversy are incomparable. He gives his adversary the benefit of the most candid and ample statement of his case, as if sure of his own ability to overthrow his arguments. And with all this dialectic power, he is never a mere controversialist. His mind passes beyond the driving clouds of the question in dispute, to the serene atmosphere of pure speculation. The keen desire for controversial victory, which is apparent in his writings, is ever subordinate to an intellectual love of truth, and a spiritual love of goodness. His works have a value which outlasts their immediate occasion. Like clear deep water, which on the surface reflects the surrounding objects, but

shows treasures at the bottom to the fixed gaze of an attentive observer, the writings of Augustine, however transitory the circumstances to which they refer, disclose to one who studies them the wealth of his thoughtful mind.

Among the Fathers of the Latin Church, Augustine is the most philosophical. On this account he is often compared with Origen, the most profound and speculative of the Greek theologians. They have certain obvious points of resemblance: transcendent genius, vast industry, combining theological studies with philosophical theories; and also a rare gift of fascination, exercising a kind of spell over other men. But Augustine and Origen are opposed to each other in the specific qualities which are characteristic of their minds. So strongly marked is their intellectual difference that it nearly corresponds to the limits of the languages in which they respectively wrote. Augustine was little regarded by the Greeks; Origen as little by the Latins. The same separation reappears in modern times between French and German theology; and the contrast between Augustine and Origen may be illustrated to a certain extent by comparing them respectively to French and Germans. Their specific difference is analogous to that which has been drawn between logic and intuition, between understanding and pure reason. It is in France, more than elsewhere, that Augustine's name and theology have been cherished, doubtless from sympathy of temperament.



His mind, candid and comprehensive, saw a question on all sides, but he had little of the impartiality of a judge. He took one side with the ardour of a partisan, and his ingenuity in framing replies to arguments on the other side, led him sometimes to undervalue their force. The various elements of race in the inhabitants of North Africa seem to have been combined in Augustine: Numidian intensity of emotions, Greek refinement, and the unresting activity of the Phœnician, all brought under the yoke of Roman habits of obedience to authority.

High as is the reputation of Augustine as a theologian, it has been greatly increased by personal interest in his character as a man. The intense passionateness of his soul, his warmth and tenderness of affection, his impulsiveness and vehemence, appear transparently in his controversial treatises. Few eminent writers have put so much of their own temperament into their works. If he argues against the freedom of the will, he shows clearly how his own experience has taught him what it is to be

“Lord of himself, that heritage of woe.”

If he inculcates ascetic virtue, and extols the glory of chastity, he betrays the struggle within himself between the spirit of holiness to which he renders allegiance, and the unextinguished rebellion of a wanton fancy. And if he maintains the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, as defined by the Catholic Church, he is still far from

concealing the rash licence of speculation which led him into heresy during his early manhood.

His inner life, the course of his spiritual growth, is better known to us than that of almost any man, by means of his *Confessions*. In that celebrated autobiography he discloses with the utmost frankness the errors and sins of his youth, neither hiding the greatest nor the least of his transgressions. Such a record, written by another man, might well repel readers. As it is, the charm of his fervid, affectionate, high-minded soul, straining always out of darkness to light, is irresistible, and makes the *Confessions* of St. Augustine a treasure to all Christians. He holds a place in ecclesiastical history not unlike that which David has in Jewish history, as one whose deepest utterances find an echo in the hearts of all mankind, by means of the sympathy of a common humanity, overpowering all differences of condition and circumstances. Augustine's mind, profoundly imbued with the language and spirit of the Psalms, turns frequently to ejaculations in the manner of David; as, for instance, in the well-known words with which his *Confessions* begin—

“Thou, Lord, art great, and above all praise; yet a man ventures to praise Thee; a man, an atom among Thy creatures, bearing in his mortality the evidence of his sinfulness. He ventures to praise Thee, and Thou inspirest him; for Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee.”

Augustine has minutely related in his *Confessions* the devious course by which he was led to Christ. At his birth he was sprinkled with consecrated salt, and marked with the sign of the cross, but his baptism was deferred in accordance with the popular sentiment of which we have examples in Constantine and Constantius. His father, Patricius, was at that time unconverted; his mother, Monica, was a devout Christian, but so dreaded the consequences of sin after Baptism, that she refused Augustine's request to be baptized in his childhood. Both his parents were so fascinated by his brilliant promise at an early age, and by his singular loveableness of disposition, that they indulged him without restraint, and let him do much as he liked.

At school he took a wayward course, excelling in the studies to which he was inclined, and neglecting those which he did not care for. He hated arithmetic: "One and one make two, two and two make four, was an odious chant to me," he says. Greek he studied reluctantly, and never learned well. In later years he regretted that the discipline of his youth had not been stricter. He was meanwhile devouring eagerly the stories of the fall of Troy, the adventures of Æneas and Dido, and the other fables of ancient poetry. His father strained his slender means to the utmost to give him a better education than his native place Tagaste, or the neighbouring city of Madaura, could afford. Accordingly Augustine was sent, at

the age of sixteen, to Carthage. In the course of the next year his father died, won over to the Christian faith at the last by the gentle persuasion and holy example of Monica. The widowed mother was divided between anxiety for her son's spiritual welfare and ambition for his worldly success. She was assisted by a rich neighbour to bear the expense of Augustine's remaining at Carthage, and for the next three years he led the life of a dissolute student, foremost alike in learning and in mischief.

Impulsive and flexible, the current of his thoughts was suddenly turned by reading Cicero's treatise, *Hortensius*. He felt at once that nothing in the world was worth living for, compared with wisdom. The object of his prayers and of his redoubled studies was to be wise. In this hope he applied himself to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, but he did not yet appreciate them.

It was at such a critical moment that he fell into the company of some members of the Manichæan sect, which continued numerous at Carthage in spite of popular obloquy and the edicts of emperors. Their profession of superior enlightenment, their claim to have selected and combined the best elements of all religions, attracted Augustine, and he adopted the doctrines of Mani with ardour. On revisiting his home in Numidia, flushed with triumph from his successes as an orator in the theatre at Carthage, he outraged his mother's piety by scoffing at her religion. She

forbade him to sit at table with her; but when she lay down weeping she was comforted by a dream;<sup>1</sup> and a bishop whom she consulted reassured her, saying, "Let him alone, and pray for him. It cannot be that the child of so many tears should perish."

Her patience was long and sorely tried. For the next nine years Augustine remained a Manichæan; although, as he became better acquainted with the leaders of the sect, he began to esteem them less. He saw the shallowness of their pretension to transcendental knowledge, and found their chief teacher, Faustus, a superficial though eloquent man. The humility and self-denial of Christian life were, however, as yet repugnant to him; and paganism was now out of the question.

During this period of his life, about the year 384, an edict of the Emperor Theodosius, confirmed by the Western Emperor Valentinian, prohibited the pagan worship, which had long been declining. A few years later, one of the principal temples of Carthage, dedicated to the celestial goddess, variously styled Tanith, Astarte, Juno, or Venus, was given over to the use of the Christian Church. It had been for some time disused, and brambles blocked up the entrance.<sup>2</sup> The precincts, which were said to be two miles in circumference, contained several buildings which were left to decay; but the populace still cherished a secret hope, fostered by

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<sup>1</sup> *Conf.*, iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, ch. xxviii. note 33.

heathen oracles, that one day the ancient orgies would be renewed.<sup>1</sup> When Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, came to take possession, it was observed as a providential coincidence, that the front of the temple bore the inscription, "Aurelius pontifex dicavit."<sup>2</sup> Other temples, especially those which were in rural districts, were razed to the ground; and the pagan rites, no longer exercised in public, survived only in secret incantations, becoming a kind of sorcery and witchcraft. Augustine mentions an instance of a soothsayer, who proposed to offer sacrifices on his behalf, to propitiate the heathen deities, that he might win a prize for oratory. His reply was, "Not if the crown were of gold and immortal, would I suffer you to kill even a fly for me." This aversion to the taking of animal life was part of the Manichæan doctrine.

A new turn was given to Augustine's thoughts by the death of a friend whom he dearly loved. His friend, a Manichæan, was baptized in a state of unconsciousness, and afterwards revived for a short time. Augustine, coming in, began to jest at the sacrament; for the Manichæans, holding that matter was essentially evil, regarded material means of grace with contempt. To his surprise, his friend repulsed him indignantly, and told him that if he spoke so to him, they could be friends no longer. His death, which followed shortly afterwards, plunged Augustine in passionate grief,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> Bingham, *Antiquities*, viii. 2.

which he tried in vain to dispel by change of scene. He took ship from Carthage to Rome, eluding his mother, who refused to be separated from him. While she passed the night in prayers and tears in the church of St. Cyprian on the shore, he stole away to the vessel and sailed. On his arrival at Rome, he was attacked by a fever, from which he narrowly escaped with his life.

His experiences at Rome were unfavourable. The scholars to whom he taught rhetoric were less turbulent and ill mannered than those of Carthage, but they were apt to leave their fees unpaid. The Manichæan leaders, who were called the elect, disgusted him by their vicious morals. After a short stay, he sought and obtained the office of public professor of rhetoric at Milan, at that time the seat of government of the Western empire. His duty was to be the official spokesman of the city on state occasions, besides which he had the opportunity of making a large income by pupils.

At Milan, Augustine went to hear the bishop preach, having heard of his reputation for eloquence. He listened critically, as a professor of the same art, but soon felt the constraining force of a more masculine character than his own. For the bishop of Milan was Ambrose, the greatest of all who have held that see, and one of the greatest among the Fathers of the Western Church. The Milanese cherish to this day the Liturgy which they have received from St. Ambrose, and have always jealously resisted papal attempts to reduce their



ritual to Roman uniformity. Ambrose had been called to the episcopate by popular acclamation when he held the civil office of prefect, and his conduct as bishop had more than justified the hopes which were entertained of him. A Roman by descent, he showed on more than one occasion the undaunted courage of the ancient tribunes of the republic, sublimated by Christian holiness.

In the year 385, soon after Augustine's arrival in Milan, Ambrose dared to resist the command of the Arian Empress Justina, who required him to surrender one of the churches for her use. He was summoned before the imperial court to answer for his refusal ; but the tumult of the city was so great, when fears were entertained for his safety, that his judges not only let him go, but solicited him to use his authority to calm the excited people. During this period of agitation, Ambrose introduced the practice of antiphonal singing by the congregation in churches, to relieve the anxious vigils which they kept with their bishop,<sup>1</sup> hourly expecting his arrest or the seizure of their churches.

The sermons of Ambrose led Augustine to a fresh view of the interpretation of Scripture. A text which he often repeated was "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life ;" and the vista of allegory which this key opened in the hands of Ambrose, was to Augustine a new discovery. He listened with growing interest, his admiration of the preacher

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<sup>1</sup> *Conf.*, ix. 7 ; *Robertson*, i. 270.

enhanced by respect for the personal qualities of the kinglike man. After a time, he sought an interview with the bishop, whom he found easy of access, but too busy for the conversation which he desired. Ambrose simply advised him to study Isaiah. His mind was eminently earnest and practical, with little inclination for theological disputes ; and Augustine respected him none the less for the unlikeness of his great qualities to those which he had been accustomed to admire. In the midst of his lectures, orations, and treatises, Augustine was still, at the age of thirty, eagerly seeking for truth as a pearl of great price, for which he was willing to sell all that he had ;<sup>1</sup> nor had the licence of his own conduct extinguished in him a fervent love of moral goodness.

From Ambrose he turned to Simplician, a venerable man, who had been an instructor to Ambrose in Christian doctrine. He related to Simplician at length the phases of opinion through which he had passed, and told him that he had lately read some of the writings of Plato, translated into Latin by Victorinus, a celebrated rhetorician at Rome, Simplician replied that he had known Victorinus well, and proceeded to relate his conversion to the Christian faith. As Augustine listened to the story how this master of his art, so renowned for oratory that his statue had been placed in the Roman Forum, had in his old age said to Sim-

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<sup>1</sup> *Conf.*, viii. 2.

plician, "Come with me to the church; I wish to become a Christian," every word touched him with a thrill of sympathy, and he began to think of imitating his example.

There were at Milan several African friends of Augustine; and one of these, Pontitian, who had met with the life of the hermit Anthony, related to him the particulars. Augustine was astonished and humbled at the recital, which was altogether new to him. Ashamed to have been ignorant of the existence of so great a man, he inquired further about monasteries, and drank in eagerly all that his friend could tell him of those who had renounced the world for Christ. He rose from his seat, in an agony of conflicting emotions, and ran into the garden, tearing his hair, beating his forehead, and gesticulating wildly. Alypius, another of his friends, followed him, but he desired to be alone. He flung himself down under a fig tree, weeping passionately, and crying, "How long, Lord? how long?" On a sudden he heard a child's voice from an adjoining house, singing repeatedly, "Take and read; take and read."

He went back to Alypius, and took up a copy of St. Paul's Epistles, which he had left by his side. The first words on which his eyes fell were—"Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."<sup>1</sup> From

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 13; *Conf.*, x. 27.

that hour his resolution was taken. He was resolved to become a Christian and a monk. "Too late," he exclaimed, in recording his experiences—"too late have I learned to love Thee, Lord, whose beauty is so ancient and yet so new! Thou wast within, while I stood seeking Thee outside." He lost no time in announcing his change of heart to his mother, who had followed him to Milan, and was overjoyed at this answer to her constant prayers. On Easter Eve, he was baptized.

An ecclesiastical tradition of ancient date has ascribed the canticle, "Te Deum," to this occasion. The legend is that on the day of Augustine's baptism he and Ambrose extemporized the verses of this canticle alternately, by divine inspiration. Of this questionable legend there is not found any confirmation in the copious works of Ambrose and Augustine. Yet the date and authorship of the "Te Deum," as given by the legend, are probably not far from the truth. It is likely to have been composed in the troubles at Milan which preceded Augustine's baptism. Its language corresponds in every particular with the circumstances of Ambrose's flock, when they were awaiting an Arian persecution; when their foremost thoughts, "day by day," were to magnify Christ as "the everlasting Son of the Father," and to supplicate His all-powerful help for those who put their trust in Him. The most competent critics do not ascribe the "Te Deum" to St. Ambrose. But its style in some respects is like his. The style of St.

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Ambrose is distinguished by closeness of thought and brevity of expression. His genuine hymns are dogmatic rather than sentimental. A recent Italian editor says of them, "He never allows himself to be led away by poetical prettiness, but loves sublime doctrinal verities."<sup>1</sup>

Monica, like her son, had some experience of the benevolent severity of Ambrose. She had been used in Africa to make oblations of bread, meat, and wine, at the altars of the saints, part of which was consumed by the giver, and the rest distributed among the poor. This same custom had also been known in Italy, but Ambrose prohibited it as giving occasion to intemperance, and Monica was obliged to refrain from this expression of her devotion, which she did with admirable readiness.<sup>2</sup> Following the example of Ambrose, Augustine afterwards exerted himself in Africa to abolish these feasts, which, under the name of agapæ, degenerated into drunken revels, held in the churches on saints' days. They were prohibited by a Council at Hippo in A.D. 393, and subsequently at Carthage.<sup>3</sup>

A short time after Augustine's baptism, he and Monica left Milan, with his son Adeodatus, and also his friend Alypius, both of whom were baptized with him.

At Ostia, the port of Rome, from which he was

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<sup>1</sup> Biraghi, quoted by Wordsworth, *Miscellanies*, i. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Conf.*, vi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Fleury, xx. II.

about to set sail for Carthage, Monica was too ill to proceed further. She felt herself dying, and made the most of her last hours in converse with her son. With a frankness resembling his own, desiring to draw him nearer to herself by sympathy with his repentance, she told him of her own early faults; how wine had been a temptation to her as a girl, when she had the key of her father's cellar. A little before she died, they sat side by side at a window, looking over the garden of the house to the mouth of the Tiber. Their discourse passed away from the world, to the life to come in the kingdom of heaven. The idea of communion with God, spirit to spirit, without the intervention of earthly signs and channels of communication, was the theme of the discourse, the form in which they conceived eternal life. Then she said to him, "Nothing keeps me attached to this world. All I lived for was to see you a true Christian before I died. God has given me more than I asked." She lived five days longer, and was sometimes unconscious. Her last words were, "Bury my body anywhere, no matter where; all I ask is, wherever you are, remember me at the altar of the Lord."

For a year Augustine led a retired life at Rome, during which time he composed a treatise on Manichæism. In the year 388, he returned to his home in Numidia, Tagaste, and gave away the money, probably considerable, which he had acquired at Milan, Rome, and Carthage. He formed

a monastic brotherhood, with Alypius and other friends, which was a pattern to many fraternities afterwards. From this seclusion he was drawn into public life by his election as coadjutor to Valerius at Hippo. Valerius was a Greek by birth, and could not preach with ease in Latin.<sup>1</sup> He therefore availed himself gladly of Augustine's eloquence, although it had not been usual, before this time, for a presbyter to preach in the presence of a bishop.

In the year 395, the death of Valerius left Augustine the sole Bishop of Hippo, old in spiritual experience, but young in years and in energy. His choice would have been to lead a studious, contemplative life. "Nothing is better," he said, "than to study divine wisdom without distraction. But the Gospel makes me afraid. To preach, to refute, to reprove, to edify, to take care for each individual soul, is a heavy burden and toil. Who would not shun it? But the Gospel makes me afraid, when I think of the slothful servant who buried his lord's talent."<sup>2</sup>

Once embarked on the duties of his episcopate, Augustine's activity was incessant. His voluminous literary works were written in the intervals of a life in which the pressure of diocesan cares, and of controversies involving the whole Church, left him few opportunities of leisure for the meditations to which he would fain have devoted himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermo* cccxxxix., etc. See Trench, *Parables*, p. 273.





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DONATIST CONFERENCE.

HIPPO, in common with the rest of Numidia, was distracted by the Donatist schism. The Donatists outnumbered the Catholics, and their rude intolerance was a constant cause of irritation. Not many years before, the Donatist bishop, Faustinus, had reduced the Catholics to temporary distress for bread, by forbidding the members of his congregation to bake for them.

The grounds of the controversy were so simple that Augustine soon thought he had mastered them, and he was sanguine enough to hope that a conference with the Donatist leaders would convince them of the false position in which they stood, apart and isolated from the fellowship of the Catholic Church.

The Donatists had no desire, on their part, to enter the lists against so formidable a disputant. A year after his arrival at Hippo, he had encountered a Manichæan priest, Fortunatus, who was regarded as a man of ability. After a conference which

lasted two days, Augustine had put him to confusion, and caused him to leave Hippo, never to return. The Donatist bishop at Hippo, Proculeius, talked to friends of Augustine about his wish to hold a conference with him, but could not be brought to the point. It was only by extreme patience and courtesy that Augustine was able to enter into any negotiations with the Donatists. Some of their members, like Cresconius, declared that his skill in dialectics gave him an unfair advantage. Others, falling back on the original ground of the schism, said, "The children of the martyrs have nothing to say to the children of traditors."

More than eighty years had now elapsed since Majorinus had been elected as a rival to Cæcilian by the Numidian bishops assembled at Carthage. Few men living could remember that time; still fewer could remember the terrible outbreak of the persecution, eight years earlier, when the clergy were summoned to give up their books. Majorinus had been succeeded by Donatus, and since Donatus, Parmenian and Primian had been elected to the primacy of the Donatists, while an offshoot, under Maximian, had quite lately repeated the schism on a smaller scale. Quarrelling with Primian and excommunicated by him, Maximian found means, with the help of a rich lady, after Lucilla's example, to obtain the condemnation of Primian by two Councils, afterwards overruled by a much larger Council, at which 310 Donatist bishops were assembled.

Thereupon Maximian, who had been consecrated Bishop of Carthage by his adherents, was condemned ; and the Donatists did not hesitate to use the aid of the Government to eject him and the bishops who had consecrated him. These incidents took place while Augustine was assisting Valerius at Hippo.

In the mean time, Cæcilian had been followed by Rufus, Gratus, and Restitutus. But the quarrel had not diminished in bitterness. The Donatists persisted in recalling the incidents of the persecution, as if they had happened recently, and all that their sect had suffered since was an aggravation of the first offence. Donatist blood had been shed by imperial soldiers, who suppressed their worship with the approval of Catholic Churchmen. That was enough, in their eyes, to identify the Catholics with the State, and the State with the persecuting emperors before Constantine. For them, indeed, the accession of Constantine was not the epoch of change which it appeared to the rest of Christendom. He was their enemy, and his successors were no better nor worse in their estimation than the emperors before him. None had shown more favour to them than the apostate Julian, who recalled them from banishment, not so much for good will or equal toleration, as to vex the Catholics, whom he appeared to hate more than he loved any one.

A common tendency of partisans to remember what they wish to remember, and forget what they

wish to forget, is illustrated in a remarkable degree by the Donatists. For them the Catholics were identified with Cæcilian, whom they persisted in calling a traditor, although the accusation had been thrice dismissed as a calumny by impartial judges at Rome, at Arles, and at Milan. They continued to denounce the alliance of the State as sinful, forgetting that they had themselves courted this alliance formerly. They brooded over all the hardships they had suffered, ignoring all the provocation they had given. In relation to the Maximianists, who seceded from them, they found themselves using the same arguments which they repudiated when urged upon themselves by Catholics.

It could not reasonably be expected that the Catholics should forbear to evince a corresponding hostility towards the Donatists. They also had suffered much from the violence of the Circumcellions, and they were indignant at the implacable and factious conduct of their adversaries. The history of the schism, written by Optatus, Bishop of Milevum, in A.D. 370, as a reply to Parmenian, is not without indications of a vindictive spirit. Nevertheless, on the whole, the Catholics showed a conciliatory and equitable disposition, which would have soon made peace if there had been any effective response on the other side.

Among the Donatists there were a few, of whom the grammarian Tichonius was a representative, who were dissatisfied with their separation from the rest of the Church, and, looking upon this

isolated condition as an unhappy result of special circumstances, were not unwilling to meet Augustine's overtures to a conference. Tichonius wrote a treatise, in which he took up the same position which was taken by Catholics, that the Church was not local merely, but universal; that the sins of particular members did not frustrate the promises of God; and that the sacrament of Baptism was not of necessity invalid, although administered outside the true Church. This last point had, in effect, been conceded by the Donatists, in offering renewal of fellowship to the followers of Maximian; but they were not prepared to apply the same rule to the Catholics, and persisted in rebaptizing them.

As early as the year 393, Augustine composed a sort of canticle,<sup>1</sup> in order to make known to uneducated people, in a form easily remembered, the facts and principles on which the Church relied in the dispute. The several verses of this canticle begin with consecutive letters of the alphabet, after the manner of Jeremiah's Lamentations and some of the Psalms, and the whole concludes with an exhortation to unity. In his treatise on the unity of the Church, written a few years afterwards, he expresses with remarkable conciseness the principle which he elaborated in numerous discourses and writings. "Christ in His fulness consists of the Head and the Body. The Head is the only

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 403.

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begotten Son of God, and the Body is His Church: the Bridegroom and the Bride, two in one flesh.”<sup>1</sup>

As a step towards fellowship and for mutual advantage, he proposed to his Donatist rival at Hippo that members of either party, if under censure, should not be admitted as proselytes to the other without penance. But while he himself acted according to this rule, the Donatists would not. Contrary to their own profession of exclusiveness and purity, they were very lax both in admitting and retaining members whose conduct brought scandal on the body to which they belonged.<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of the ascetic revival in the Church, there was more strictness of discipline among the Catholics than among the Donatists.

A Council was held at Hippo in A.D. 393, under the presidency of Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, who summoned the Council by Augustine's advice. This was the first of a series of plenary Councils, as they were called, comprising the whole province of Africa in its largest sense. No less than eighteen such Councils were held between the years 393 and 419, in which hardly any point of doctrine or discipline was left untouched. At the Council of Hippo Canons were passed to facilitate the reception of Donatists into the Church. “We ought not to doubt,” it was said, “but that the good of peace and the sacrifice of charity effaces the evil which these, misled by the authority of their forefathers,

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<sup>1</sup> *De Unit. Eccl.*, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, i. 403.

have committed by rebaptizing." The decree was not to take effect until the Church across the sea had been consulted.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine was for a long time opposed to the use of coercion in religious questions. His episcopate marks the beginning of a milder and more charitable spirit in the relations of the African Church to the Donatists. The clergy endeavoured to mitigate the imperial laws against them, and offered to recognize their bishops. These conciliatory acts, seconded by the example of greater purity and severity of morals in the Church, was not without good effect. Conversions were numerous among the more moderate of the sectaries, but the rest were only provoked to fiercer hostility by this success. The Circumcellions broke out with renewed fury, and committed their former outrages, maltreating several of the Catholic bishops. It was resolved, at a Council held at Carthage in A.D. 404, to appeal to Honorius, the feeble Emperor of the West, who about this time fixed his court at Ravenna. The consequence of this appeal was that laws of increased severity were made against the Donatists. Augustine deprecated the full execution of these laws, still clinging to the hope of pacification by conference with the leaders.

After a series of edicts, which betray by their violence and inconsistency the weakness of the imperial court, now trembling at the advance of

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xix. 41, xxiv. 10.



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the Goths, Honorius granted the petition of the Catholics to appoint a conference between the Donatists and themselves. The Donatists were promised the suspension of all penal laws during the conference, and liberty to return home in safety, whatever might be the result; but they were warned that, in case of their refusal to appear, conformity would be strictly enforced. The tribune Marcellinus, a man whose virtues are commended not only by Augustine but by Jerome, was nominated imperial commissioner to preside during the debate. Everything was done by the Catholics to conciliate their opponents. They offered to resign their bishoprics if they were proved to be in error; and, if victorious, to recognize the Donatist bishops as brethren. In the impulsive generosity of these proposals it is easy to trace the influence of Augustine's character. Marcellinus proposed that if the Donatists objected to him as a judge, they should themselves nominate any one of equal rank to be associated with him. They declined to avail themselves of this offer, saying they had not asked for the first judge, nor would they ask for a second. Reluctantly and sullenly, they consented to meet the Catholics, and appeared in full strength at Carthage at the end of May, A.D. 411. Two hundred and seventy-nine Donatist bishops entered the city together. The number of Catholic bishops assembled to meet them was two hundred and eighty-six.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon says, ch. xxxiii., "The Donatist bishops asserted that

Much preliminary discussion was raised as to the slight disparity of numbers, the Donatists alleging that they were a majority if their absent members were counted. They had an able leader in the Bishop of Constantina, Petilian, who had been an eminent advocate, and who was said to have been baptized and raised to the episcopate in haste to strengthen their party.

On the 1st of June, the bishops met for conference in the Baths of Gargilius, the largest ecclesiastical assembly in the history of the African Church and one of the greatest ever gathered together, if measured by the number of bishops present. The ostensible question in dispute was strangely disproportionate to the importance which both sides attached to the issue of the conference. It was no more than this: whether a Bishop of Carthage, nearly a century before, had, by betraying his trust, contaminated the whole Catholic Church since his time. But the dispute necessarily involved two questions of principle beyond the particular question of fact: the general questions, What are the notes of the true Church? and what is the criterion of true doctrine? These larger questions, applicable to all time, give to the conference of Carthage a significance far beyond its local interest, or its imposing display of numbers.

Both sides were agreed to describe the Church

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their whole number was not less than 400. The Catholics had 286 present, 120 absent, besides 64 vacant bishoprics."

as "the Holy Catholic Church ;" but the Donatists insisted on the note of holiness as the one supreme essential, ignoring Catholicity.<sup>1</sup> The Catholics, on the contrary, insisted on Catholicity as a note of the true Church more discernible than holiness, and contended that the holiness to be predicated of the body, as a whole, did not imply freedom from the spots and blemishes caused by the presence of vicious members. While recognizing the duty of ejecting scandalous offenders, and in fact enforcing stricter discipline than the Donatists, the Catholics were less rigorous in their ideal of holiness as a note of the Church.

As to the criterion of truth in doctrine, this conference is no less memorable as bringing into unprecedented prominence the authority of Holy Scripture. Largely as the Scriptures had been quoted in all previous controversies, it was at this time that the distinction was finally drawn between the Canonical Books of the New Testament, as we now have them, and the other books of venerable authorship, such as the Epistle of Barnabas, which for a time were placed alongside the Canonical Books. A Council at Carthage, in A.D. 397, following upon a Council which had been convened at Hippo, defined the canon of the New Testament exactly it is now universally received ; and to the New Testament, thus clearly defined, Augustine appealed in the Donatist controversy, as the infallible

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iii. 290, etc.

criterion of truth. His opponents wished to introduce into the dispute the decrees of their Councils, the visions and sayings, confirmed by alleged miracles, of their own saints and martyrs. There was no common ground of argument in these between the two parties, and it was decided, not without protest, to let the question stand or fall by the testimony of Holy Scripture.

Much time was wasted in preliminary wrangling as to the terms of debate. At length seven bishops were chosen on each side to represent their brethren; but the Donatists continued to raise frivolous objections. When Marcellinus asked them to be seated, they refused because, they said, they were forbidden by the Scriptures to sit among the ungodly. Marcellinus therefore ordered his own chair to be removed, and remained standing. When Augustine courteously spoke of the Donatists as "brethren," they resented the appellation as an insult. Notwithstanding these and similar delays, in which the first and second meetings were consumed, the conference began in earnest on the third day, the chief speakers being Augustine on behalf of the Catholics, and Petilian on behalf of the Donatists.

The chief argument of the Catholics was the palpable fact that the Donatists separated themselves from the rest of Catholic Christendom, whereas Christ desired that His Church should be one. The chief argument of the Donatists was the Apostolic command, "Put away from yourselves

that wicked person,"<sup>1</sup> which they applied to Cæcilian and all who took part with him, throughout Christendom. Augustine replied to this argument by distinguishing between the exercise of discipline on individual offenders, as in the case to which St. Paul referred, and the act of secession from a Christian society, as in the case of the Donatists. Conceding for argument's sake their assumption that wickedness had been sanctioned by the Church, he contended that in such circumstances it was a Christian's duty to be patient. "Let man punish when he has authority to punish; when he has not, let him endure submissively."<sup>2</sup>

Petilian referred to examples in the Old Testament of a minority who separated themselves from the rest of the nation when the greater number were unfaithful, as when the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal were the people of God. He also quoted the sayings of Christ: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," and "the last shall be first"—words which he applied specially to the African Church as having been converted late, and having surpassed all other Churches in the purity and constancy of the Donatist body, which alone he acknowledged as the Church. Augustine denied the applicability of these texts to the matter in dispute, and also

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<sup>1</sup> I Cor. v.

<sup>2</sup> Neander, iii. 296.

denied the alleged fact of the late conversion of Africa.

The passages on which the Catholics insisted, as making for their side, were the parable of the Tares and the parable of the Net. In the parable of the Tares Augustine saw a clear description of the actual condition of the Church—the good and the bad members intermingled; and in the words of the householder, “let both grow together till the harvest,” he read an express command to leave to God’s final judgment the separation of the spurious grain from the genuine. But the Donatists were ready with an answer. “The field,” they said, according to Christ’s own interpretation of the parable, “is the world,” not the Church. Augustine rejoined that, within the scope of this parable, the world and the Church were supposed to be co-extensive.<sup>1</sup> The tares were sown in ground already sown with good seed. No less to the point was the parable of the Net, by which the Church was undoubtedly described.<sup>2</sup> Here the mixture of bad and good was affirmed as distinctly as in the other parable, and this the Donatists admitted; but they eluded the force of the admission by saying that, while the net was under water, the good and bad fishes were undistinguishable, and therefore, as they contended, the parable was to be understood of such mingling of bad and good as lies beyond human discernment.

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<sup>1</sup> See Trench, *Parables*, p. 86, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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In these general arguments neither party approached sufficiently near to the real point at issue. But the two leaders, Petilian and Augustine, came to closer quarters in a dialogue upon the old question of Cæcilian and the traditors.<sup>1</sup>

Petilian asked Augustine, "Do you acknowledge Cæcilian as your father?"

*Augustine.* "I acknowledge no father but Him of whom our Lord says, 'One is your Father, even God.'"

*Petilian.* "Everything derives its nature from its root. New birth can proceed only from good seed."

*Augustine.* "My root is Christ: the seed from which I am regenerated is the Word of God."

*Petilian.* "How can a transgressor absolve others?"

*Augustine.* "My absolver is He who died for me. I believe not in the minister, but in the Saviour."

Petilian taunted Augustine with his early errors, but Augustine disarmed his adversary by his frank and generous confession.

Petilian then reproached the Catholics with their use of compulsion to put down heresy and schism. Augustine replied in words from another parable: "Compel them to come in." His views on the subject of persecution had undergone a change about the year 408.<sup>2</sup> Formerly he had wished to rely only on the influence of persuasion, and had met

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iii. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, i. 409.



the Donatists in the mild spirit of a Fénelon disputing with Huguenots. But his patience was exhausted by their invincible prejudice, their rudeness, and the violence of their supporters. As time went on, he showed more and more of a dogmatic intolerance, like that of Bossuet. He was able, however, to appeal securely to his opponent as holding the same principles of religious persecution. "Who," he asked, "will not approve of the laws by which the emperor forbids pagan sacrifices on penalty of death?"

The forensic skill with which Petilian conducted his case did not conceal the narrowness of mind which was characteristic of his party.

Marcellinus, at the close of the conference, gave judgment against the Donatists. They were allowed to return home unmolested, and a time was given them to consider whether or no they would avail themselves of the terms of fellowship which had been offered by the Catholics. In case of refusal, they were to suffer the utmost rigour of the law. The Donatists claimed the victory, and appealed to the emperor, without success. In the following year (A.D. 412) an edict was issued, imposing heavy fines upon all who refused to conform to the Church. The poor, who could not pay fines, were to be beaten; and masters, whether Catholics or Donatists, were ordered to force their slaves into conformity. The bishops and clergy of the sect were sentenced to banishment; their estates and places of worship were confiscated, and no one was

permitted to shelter them. As if this edict was not severe enough, another was added, two years later, depriving the Donatists of civil rights.

These cruel edicts, unlike many others which had been issued in former times against the Donatists, appear to have been actually put in force against those who persisted in renouncing the communion of the Church. The government was emboldened to take these extreme measures by the success which had attended the persuasions of Augustine and his Catholic brethren. Persecution was used, not against the Donatist body in its full strength, but against a remnant from which the best and wisest members had for the most part withdrawn. And so at length this celebrated schism was crushed. It had begun in a personal quarrel, and had been fostered by the mutual antagonism of town and country, of rich and poor, of educated and uneducated. The sectaries had gained strength by the severity of their discipline and their religious strictness, at a time when the rulers of the Church were too eager to avail themselves of the prosperity which Constantine's accession opened to them; and the hardships which were suffered by Donatus and his followers at that time, gave them a semblance of martyrdom which increased their popularity. They received, however, a serious discouragement in being excluded from the Councils of the Universal Church; subsequently, by taking part in an unsuccessful rebellion, they exposed themselves to the vengeance of the imperial court.

Their sudden overthrow at last may be explained by three causes :

1. By the increased fervour of religious zeal in the Church, accompanied by an increased strictness of discipline, which transferred to the Catholics the moral superiority which the Donatists had been able to dispute with some plausible reason, if not with justice, in their best days.

2. A second cause of the fall of the Donatists was the extraordinary ability of their principal opponent. The influence which was exercised in France to reclaim the Protestants by Francis de Sales, by Bossuet, and by Fénelon, is hardly adequate to represent the influence of Augustine, in winning to his side all who were accessible to eloquence or to argument, urged with an urbanity of manners and a charm of character which few could resist.

3. Lastly, the persecution by Honorius of those who were contumacious was as unrelenting as the persecution by which Louis XIV. coerced those Huguenots whom he could not bribe or persuade into conformity. The miserable Donatists grew frantic with despair. Forsaken by their party, forsaken by the faith and hope of divine support which had until now sustained them, they had no resource left but the indomitable obstinacy of temperament which would die rather than surrender. Gaudentius, one of the seven representatives at the conference, threatened to burn himself with his flock in his own church, rather than conform. The

Catholics were moved to pity by the spectacle of their despair, and tried to obtain some mitigation of the laws.

Mention is made occasionally of the Donatists in public documents after this time; but they never again became an important body. A few of them were met with in Spain and Gaul, but at no period did they find adherents in any foreign country. So long as Africa was part of the Western Empire, they conscientiously refused the offers of alliance which were made to them by the Arians; and ended as they had begun, a local sect, confined to Africa, but inseparably associated with the adversity and the prosperity of the African Church.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE FALL OF ROME.

ON August 24, A.D. 410, the city of Rome was taken and sacked by Alaric the Goth. This catastrophe was not unexpected, for twice before, in the two preceding years, the Gothic hosts had closed round the city, and had once been bought off by an enormous ransom. All the signs of the times had long pointed to an approaching dissolution of the Roman Empire. The pressure of the northern tribes beyond the Danube had with difficulty been resisted by the ablest emperors since Constantine, and that chiefly by means of the arms of Gothic mercenaries. Under the incapable sons of Theodosius, these troops disdained to acknowledge a state of dependence which was altogether imaginary. Alaric, after bearing for a short time under the Romans the title of duke, which he valued far less than his lofty Teutonic pedigree, revolted; and it was soon manifest that the Emperor Honorius had no means of quelling him.

Nevertheless, the actual capture of Rome gave a shock to the civilized world. So long as the city continued inviolate, the spell of ancient empire was unbroken. It was possible that some deliverer might arise, like Camillus according to the Roman legends, or Stilicho quite recently at Florence, and might, by superior tactics and military skill, snatch victory out of the hands of the insolent barbarians. Centuries of dominion had made Rome seem to be invincible; and it was not till its fall took place that the magnitude of the event was adequately conceived. Although Rome had ceased, from the time of Constantine, to be the seat of government, it retained many of the venerable institutions of the republic. The Roman senate still met in council, as in the days of Brennus; the Roman patricians lived in more than royal splendour, on the produce of estates situated in all parts of the empire; and there were among them families whose names recalled the glories of republican Rome. There were representatives of the Fabii, the Marcelli, the Paulli, the Scipios, and the Gracchi, and a family of less historical renown, but not less esteemed by the citizens, the Anicii. When it was told how the barbarians had taken Rome, the tales of slaughter and outrage which followed on the capture were heard with awe and horror, not so much for the number as for the dignity of the victims. It was, indeed, something portentous that a venerable Roman lady, Marcella, a descendant of the conqueror of Syracuse, was

tortured by Goths, beaten with whips, and bruised with clubs, to deliver up treasures which she was supposed to possess, but which she had in fact long ago given away to the poor.

Several fugitives of note escaped to Africa, among whom were three ladies of the Anician family—Demetrias, daughter of the consul Olybrius, with her mother Juliana, and her grandmother Proba. In the midst of the half-Oriental luxury of her father's house, the most splendid in Rome, Demetrias had resolved to dedicate herself to the life of a Christian virgin, and had begun to practise fasting and to wear coarse under-clothing, while surrounded by a train of waiting-maids and eunuchs.<sup>1</sup> There were other fugitives who ran into the opposite extreme, amusing themselves with incorrigible levity in the theatre of Carthage, while the rest of the world was mourning. The presence of these strangers from Rome increased the agitation which the fall of the city was of itself sufficient to excite. Why, men asked, has this calamity been sent? That it was a visitation of divine wrath, Christians and pagans agreed; but they were opposed to each other in their manner of explaining the cause.

To the Christians the fall of Rome was a manifest fulfilment of prophecy. In the mystical language of the Apocalypse no symbol was clearer than that which associated Babylon with Rome.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiii. 12.



The woman arrayed in purple, on whose forehead the name Babylon was written, was explained by the inspired writer to be "that great city which reigneth over the whole earth;" and the seven heads of the beast on which she sat, were explained to be "seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."<sup>1</sup> By these two signs of universal empire and a site on seven hills, Rome was denoted beyond possibility of doubt; and the eighteenth chapter of the Apocalypse, describing the fall of Babylon, had long appeared to the Christian Church to be predictive of such a day as that when Alaric and his Goths humbled the pride of Rome.<sup>2</sup>

By the pagans, on the contrary, the downfall of the city was interpreted as a punishment for neglect of the national gods of the city. Jupiter of the Capitol, Mars the Avenger, the Twin Brethren whose temple stood prominently in the Forum, deliverers in ancient days, had forsaken the Romans, who had forsaken them. Their worshippers had not ceased to resent the suppression of paganism by the edict of Theodosius, less than thirty years before. It is not surprising that they turned the fall of Rome into a reproach against the Christians,

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. xvii. 3, 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Wordsworth, "Essay on the Babylon of the Apocalypse," *Miscellanies*, 361, etc.: "The Fathers who lived in the first three centuries, that is, who flourished before Rome became Christian, recognized the city of Rome in the Apocalyptic Babylon" (p. 375). Bishop Wordsworth adds: "We follow the Fathers, as far as they go. We, with them, see the city of Rome in Babylon. But the question is, Ought we not to see something more?"

as having provoked the wrath of the tutelary gods of Rome by their new religion.

A similar charge had often been made, as early as the second century and since, by popular superstition. Tertullian, Cyprian, and Arnobius had defended the Church against successive imputations of this kind. But the unprecedented circumstances of the fall of the city gave novelty to the pagan arguments; and, in the agitated state of men's minds, there was a tendency to a pagan reaction. So, in Rome itself, a little before the city was taken, the senate gravely entertained the proposal of a pagan, who professed to be able to draw down lightning upon the Goths.<sup>1</sup> It was not until after deliberation on the idolatrous means proposed, that the offer was rejected.

The tribune Marcellinus, who had presided as imperial commissioner at the Donatist conference, requested Augustine to write an answer to those who ascribed the fall of Rome to the displeasure of the heathen gods. At his request, and with this purpose, Augustine wrote his celebrated treatise, *De Civitate Dei*, a work which, expanding beyond its original plan, and continued amid the avocations of a busy life, was thirteen years in progress, from A.D. 413 to A.D. 426.

To the reproaches of the pagans, Augustine made the obvious answer that what had happened to Rome had been accustomed to happen to other

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon.

cities, when heathen gods were commonly worshipped; and the gods had again and again been found unable to defend their worshippers. As a familiar instance, he referred to that which was the inexhaustible subject of ancient verse and prose, the fall of Troy. Troy, "the mother of the Roman people," had suffered at the hands of the Greeks worse miseries than the barbarians had inflicted on Rome, and the deities, whose images Æneas brought to Latium, were then invoked in vain.

But this argument, strong as it was, Augustine was able to put more strongly. For the Goths had shown the fruit of the Christian teaching which they had received, and had treated the conquered city with a clemency which was altogether strange to ancient warfare. They respected the shrines which had been built beside the catacombs, where the martyrs were buried, and the churches which had been erected in memory of the Apostles. Not only did they spare the fugitives who had sought the shelter of these sanctuaries, but some of the barbarians, moved with pity, dragged suppliants thither to place them out of reach of their fiercer comrades. Thus, Augustine says, many escaped death who now use the life which has been restored to them by Christ to insult His name. By pretending to be Christians, they obtained the benefit of refuge from the death which they dreaded.

Turning aside to answer the taunt that Christians had suffered in common with pagans, and had not been protected by any special Providence, he

replies that the city of the Christians is not an earthly, but a heavenly city, and that the temporal adversity, which may befall them in this mortal state, is not to them the evil which it is to those whose hope is in this life only.

As he proceeds, the horizon of his subject appears to grow wider. He discusses the various forms of paganism: the gross fables of popular mythology; the absurdities of the religious rites on which the welfare of the State was supposed to depend; the inconsistency of the Platonic philosophers, who had attained to a higher conception of the nature of God, but nevertheless paid honour to the pagan deities as good or bad angels, intermediate between God and man. This discussion completes the first part of the treatise. So far, he has only considered that which he calls the earthly city, or state. It is to the second and longer portion of his work that it owes its title and its most enduring value.

The city of God, according to Augustine's description, is the commonwealth, or society, of the faithful servants of God in all ages, past, present, and to come. At the beginning of the eleventh book of his treatise he explains its title by passages from the Psalms, such as, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God."<sup>1</sup> "We have learned from Holy Scripture," he says, "that there is a certain city founded by God, of which we

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxxvii. 2.

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desire to be citizens, with a love with which the Founder of the city has inspired us." This heavenly city, of which the Apostle speaks as "the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all," he finds prefigured in various similitudes from the creation of the world. Beginning with the angels, and their division into good and bad spirits, he traces, in the condition of man immediately after the Fall, the elements of two corresponding societies on earth. "Two cities thus were formed, by two opposite affections: the earthly, by self-love, despising God; the heavenly, by love to God, despising self."<sup>1</sup>

Augustine investigates at length, throughout human history, the course of the two rival societies, the earthly and the heavenly: the earthly, represented first by Cain and his posterity; the heavenly, represented by Seth and his descendants before the Flood. Noah's ark is a type of the Church, on which he insists, both as to its literal and figurative interpretation.

After the Flood, the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly cities reappears in the building of Babel and the call of Abraham. Several books are taken up with a survey of universal history, in which Augustine follows for the most part the order of the Books of Holy Scripture, but often refers to contemporaneous events in the Gentile world. In this historical epitome, as in the rest of

the treatise, he introduces subtle argumentative discussions, leaving no difficult problem on his way without at least an attempt at solution. Nor does he omit to trace the chain of prophecy which runs through the Old Testament, leading to Christ ; and he adds Gentile predictions, especially the famous acrostic verses ascribed to the Erythræan Sibyl, on the last judgment.<sup>1</sup>

In the nineteenth book, Augustine treats of the actual relations of the earthly to the heavenly society, as represented by the Church and the State respectively : " This heavenly city, while sojourning on earth, calls its citizens out from all nations, and collects a society of strangers in all languages ; not caring for diversity in manners, laws, and institutions, by which peace on earth is attained or preserved ; not curtailing nor destroying, but, on the contrary, preserving them ; so far as they do not hinder the worship of the one true God." <sup>2</sup>

The three concluding books treat, with characteristic precision, of the last judgment, of the condemnation of the city of the devil, and of the everlasting felicity of the city of God.

As to the general merits of this treatise of Augustine, the world has been unanimous. It is one of the rare books which of themselves form historical events. Completing and commemorating the triumph of Christianity over paganism, it closes

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<sup>1</sup> *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xix. 17.

for ever the series of apologies for the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it forms a noble introduction to the theological literature which was to come afterwards. Augustine's elaborate indictment against paganism, lying on its death-bed, commands our sympathy less, in some respects, than the bold invectives which Tertullian hurled against paganism in its vigour; but the completeness of Augustine's treatment leaves the subject exhausted, requiring nothing more to be said. Of the importance of the second part of his work it is hardly possible to form an adequate conception. He had so assimilated the learning of his predecessors and contemporaries that the theology of the age appears to be embodied in this one treatise; while his genius sheds a brilliant light on all he touches, and gives to his whole work a coherent and systematic form.

To this day the popular notions of theology and history, especially in the Latin Church, are, to a great extent, taken from the ideas of Augustine. In subsequent ages of intellectual torpor, during which the foremost men were content to be commentators and interpreters of the Fathers, it was Augustine's *City of God*, beyond any other book, which supplied them with food for thought. This work was the favourite study of Charlemagne, and taught him the ideal according to which he endeavoured to construct a city of God on earth, so

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<sup>1</sup> See Milman, *Latin Christianity*.



far as rude times, and his own rude hands, permitted. Its influence may be traced further, through Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen, into mediæval theology; and modern books of standard reputation, such as Bossuet's *Universal History*, are still clearly marked by the stamp which Augustine's master-mind has set upon the literature of Christendom.

While he was thus labouring for his own age and for posterity at Hippo, the African provinces were affected by the collapse of the Roman Empire in many ways. A few years before the fall of Rome, the Moors rose again in rebellion under Gildo, the brother of Firmus, who had obtained from the Romans his brother's inheritance. He is described by the poet Claudian as a monster of cruelty and rapacity.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he was permitted by the ministers of Honorius to govern the African provinces in the emperor's name, with the title of count, until he chose to transfer his nominal allegiance to the Eastern Emperor Arcadius—an act which he followed up by stopping the supplies of corn to Rome. He was defeated and killed; but a period of disorder followed.

His successor, Count Heraclian, no less rapacious, forced noble Roman ladies to marry speculative merchants, who gave him bribes, in hope of making a profit of their marriage, whenever the fugitives from Rome might recover their estates.<sup>2</sup> Heraclian

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. xxxi.

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was able to aid the plans of Honorius at the time when Rome was under the dominion of the Goths, by refusing to export corn from Africa ; and again, after their departure, by sending extraordinary supplies. But in A.D. 413 he aspired to the imperial throne, and invaded Italy with a large force from Africa. His expedition failed ignominiously, and he paid for his presumption with his life, as soon as he returned to Carthage with the scanty remnant of his followers.

His fate was shared by several of the leading men in Carthage, including the tribune Marcellinus, for whose life Augustine interceded in vain. He was a man of rare ingenuousness and purity of character, so that his own brother, who was imprisoned with him, said, "If I suffer this for my sins, how have you deserved it, whose life I know to have been so Christian?" Marcellinus replied, "Supposing my life were such as you describe, think you that God has shown me a light mercy in punishing my sins here, and not reserving them for future judgment?"<sup>1</sup> His death was regarded as a martyrdom ; for it was ascribed to malicious accusations of the Donatists, in revenge for the decision which he gave against them.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiii. II.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

CARTHAGE was the resort of an extraordinary number of strangers at the time of the calamities of Rome. Not only did Roman fugitives crowd thither, but visitors from other parts of the world, who in more favourable circumstances would have made their residence in Italy, passed over to Africa to be out of reach of the barbarian invaders. Among these strangers were two companions, one of whom at least was from the remote island of Britain, Pelagius and Cælestius. Pelagius, whose name is supposed to be a translation of the Welsh name, Morgan, or "dweller by the sea," was the elder of the two, a man of ascetic habits and of great learning. The origin of the other, Cælestius, is uncertain. It is known, however, that he had made considerable worldly sacrifices to devote himself to an ascetic life. The arrival at Carthage of these two monks led to a controversy, which was only second to the Arian controversy in the

dissension to which it gave rise throughout the Western Church.

Pelagius and Augustine appear to have met at Carthage about the time of the Donatist conference. Their intercourse was friendly, and Augustine continued afterwards to speak of Pelagius with respect and affection, notwithstanding theological disputes. The colder temperament of Pelagius was proof against the charm of Augustine's personal character, which was too enthusiastic to be congenial to him. He had, while in Italy, heard some one use Augustine's prayer, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt"—a sentiment which he censured as overstrained. Severe to sternness in morals, irreproachable in his private conduct, Pelagius held that sufficient light and strength had been given to man for his guidance. Self-help, self-discipline, self-control, were what men needed, in his opinion, rather than to confess a weakness which was too apt to serve as an excuse for sin. But this divergence of opinion was kept for a time in the background, under the pressure of a busy life, and of urgent questions in which Pelagius and Augustine were united.

In the terrible crisis of the fall of Rome, it became a daily care to give spiritual counsel and encouragement to the unhappy fugitives. Both Augustine and Pelagius, in common with all the foremost Churchmen of that age, were earnest advocates of celibacy. A letter is extant, which was written by Pelagius to Demetrias, at her mother's request, on

the occasion of her taking the veil<sup>1</sup>—an act upon which she resolved when the day of her marriage was already fixed. On this same occasion she received congratulatory letters from Augustine, and also from Jerome, who maintained, in his Eastern seclusion, a lively interest in his Roman friends.

There was much in the social anarchy of the time to recommend a celibate life, especially for women. The respect which was paid to religious vows protected them from many evils: sometimes even from the violence of barbarians; sometimes from the avarice of men who would have forced them into detested marriages for the sake of their property; and in any case from the temptations of a worldly society, which, in the desperation of its downfall, had grown more shameless than ever. But while these considerations are sufficient to explain and to justify the recommendation of celibacy, it was not on grounds of expediency that such men as Ambrose and Jerome and Augustine actually relied, but on the intrinsic beauty and holiness of virginity. The conclusions to which they were led unconsciously, by a sound practical judgment, they preferred to vindicate as a Divine counsel of perfection. In these views Pelagius agreed with them, and probably his private friendship with Demetrias, and her mother Juliana, was a connecting link with Augustine.

It was not through Pelagius himself, but through

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 414.

his friend Cælestius, a more outspoken and contentious man, that the Pelagian controversy arose. When Cælestius presented himself for ordination as presbyter, he was charged with denying what has since been known as the doctrine of original sin. A synod was held at Carthage in A.D. 412, at which Cælestius was accused by the deacon Paulinus, of Milan, under seven articles, for teaching that Adam had been created mortal; that his sin was prejudicial to himself alone; that new-born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before he sinned; together with several inferences from these principles to the effect that neither Baptism nor the Gospel of Christ was necessary to salvation.<sup>1</sup> Cælestius maintained, in his defence, that he knew several priests who denied original sin; that the Church had not given any decision as to the chief points in question; and that they were therefore open to speculation. He was condemned and excommunicated; soon after which he left Carthage, having first appealed to the Bishop of Rome against the decision of the Council. When the proceedings were reported to Pelagius, who was at that time in the Holy Land, he declared that the opinions which were condemned at Carthage were not held by himself, nor by any man of sense.

However, in the year 415, Pelagius was accused of heresy before the Bishop of Jerusalem,

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiii. 2.

by a young Spanish presbyter, Orosius, who had been recommended by Augustine to Jerome, then living in his hermitage near Bethlehem. Orosius could not express himself clearly in Greek, nor could the Eastern clergy understand Latin; so Pelagius, who was familiar with both languages, obtained an easy advantage over his accuser. At the instance of Orosius, the question was referred to Rome. Later in the same year, two bishops from Gaul renewed the accusation of heresy against Pelagius at Cæsarea, but they failed to appear at the synod of fourteen bishops which was called at Diospolis by the metropolitan Eusebius; and Pelagius, who disclaimed the errors of which he was accused, was absolved.

By this time it was apparent that a new question of doctrine had arisen, which was felt by the whole Christian world to be of primary importance. Among the disputants who had already come forward were clergy from Britain, Gaul, Italy, Spain, Africa, and Syria; and if there were any doubt whether these fairly represented the wide-spread interest of the Church in the subject, such doubts were soon removed by the general agitation which followed. Before many years had elapsed, the Churches of Western Christendom, and to some extent of the East also, rang with the Pelagian controversy.

Augustine had not in the first instance taken an active part in the dispute. He was absent from Carthage at the time when Cælestius was con-



demned ; and he was drawn into the controversy by the request of his friends, Marcellinus the tribune, and Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage. He addressed two short treatises to Marcellinus, expounding the doctrine of original sin as commonly held in the Church. In these treatises, on the remission of sins and on infant Baptism, he did not mention the name of Pelagius. He afterwards wrote a third, in which, being obliged to mention him, he spoke with respect for his virtues. On his arrival at Carthage to preach on the subject, at the request of Aurelius, Augustine became aware how confident and offensive the followers of Pelagius had already grown. Still, he preserved his usual charity in speaking of them. "Let us endeavour," he said, "to persuade our brethren not to call us heretics, because we do not give them that name, though we might do so. They go too far ; it can hardly be endured : let them not abuse the patience of the Church."<sup>1</sup>

He had learned from Tertullian to lay stress on the inherited sinfulness of human nature, and was not aware that the Greeks, especially those of the school of Origen, had been accustomed to hold opinions which were not widely different from those of Pelagius. Origen's doctrine of pre-existence was suggested by ideas which were hardly to be reconciled with an acknowledgment of original sin derived from Adam. According to the view of Origen, the present life is a continuance of life

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiii. 15.

begun elsewhere ; a Platonic theory which is made familiar in modern poetry.

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;  
The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar.”

Consistently with this view, it was held by Pelagius that children were by nature innocent, and that infant Baptism, though accompanied with Divine grace for the future, was not required for any cleansing from past sins.

Pelagius and his followers were inclined to look upon the question as one for speculative philosophy rather than for dogmatic theology. Hitherto theology had been restricted to inquiries concerning the nature of God, and a new field was opened by a dispute as to the nature of man. It was felt, however, by members of the Church in every part of Christendom, that the relation of God to man, in which all religion was involved, depended not only on the nature of the Creator, but on that of the creature also.

The Eastern Church was supposed to be the chief seat of theological learning ; and Pelagius, who had been at Constantinople, and had been commended by Chrysostom, long before this controversy arose, was disposed to look down upon the theologians of the West. At the synod of Jerusalem, when the clergy present asked Pelagius whether he taught the doctrine which Augustine opposed, he inquired scornfully, “What is Augus-

tine to me?" and thereby drew on himself a general chorus of rebuke for speaking without due respect of so eminent a bishop, by whom God had given unity to Africa. He showed himself anxious, after his acquittal at Diospolis, to secure the good opinion of Augustine, and sent him a report of the proceedings. About the same time he published a treatise on the freedom of the will.

Augustine's attention was now fully drawn to the theological and metaphysical problems which were raised by these disputes. He conferred with Orosius, who soon afterwards returned to Africa; and the result was that synods were held at Carthage, and also at Milevum, in Numidia, in which both Pelagius and Cælestius were condemned. From that time forward, Augustine stood in the forefront of the Pelagian controversy. Treatise after treatise, synod after synod, bear testimony to his indefatigable activity and the varied resources of his intellect. His labours in the Donatist controversy, with the support of the government, had led to the almost complete suppression of that great schism, and he was comparatively at liberty to apply himself to the refutation of Pelagianism.

In all respects there was a remarkable contrast between the Donatist and the Pelagian controversies. The Donatist schism grew out of a personal quarrel, and was so closely involved with the remembrance of personal injuries on both sides, that it was confined to Africa. Pelagianism on the contrary represents, not a party, but a

principle, and one which is coextensive with human nature. It is hardly too much to say that all men are naturally Pelagian; and that the doctrine of Augustine, which in substance was accepted throughout the Universal Church, expresses the result of a more profound comparison of the Scriptures with the constitution and will of man, than had been applied to the subject before his time. He gave a definite form to religious ideas, which hitherto had been entertained vaguely in the Church.

Pelagius, less acquainted with human life than with books, took the superficial view of the nature of sin which is most obvious; regarding it simply with reference to its practical results, as a transgression of the law, a failure in duty, or an error from the right way. His idea of free will was equally superficial. He conceived the will as a simple faculty of choice between two alternatives; and maintained in general that God had given to man the liberty of doing right or wrong; so that to sin or not to sin stands within the option of man's own free will, and his conduct therefore measures his merit or demerit.

With a more profound intuition, and a wider spiritual experience, Augustine saw beyond the commonplace views of Pelagius. The faults of omission or commission which are called sins, were traced by Augustine to a disease in human nature, and this is what he understood by sin. According to him, the essence of sin consisted, not in acts or

habits of disobedience, but in a morbid condition of soul, transmitted from generation to generation. His idea of free will differed no less from the popular notion which Pelagius adopted. He saw in the action of the will not a simple choice, but a complicated result of many motives; desires, passions, hopes, and fears, combining together in various proportions. To call man's will free because he was unconscious of restraint, was too narrow a conception of freedom to satisfy Augustine. As freedom of will is not ascribed to a man intoxicated or delirious, so he would not consent to ascribe freedom to a will which was under evil influences arising from the sinfulness of human nature. Only a perfectly righteous will could properly be called free.

Freedom to do evil he granted to fallen man, but not freedom to do good. True liberty was the effect of the redemption of Christ, and sin was slavery. In his arguments on this subject, Augustine relied mainly on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but his illustrations are drawn from all parts of Holy Scripture.

Augustine understood by freedom, not mere immunity from the restraint or coercion which is felt by a slave, but also immunity from the inward solicitation which draws the will astray. He distinguished between freedom and choice. The will of God, he said, was free; yet in its exercise the choice of evil was impossible.<sup>1</sup> Analysing the

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 421, etc.

action of man's will, and finding in it from infancy the operation of passions, the consequences of inherited sin, and also the operation of other motives which are the fruits of that spiritual energy which is called in Scripture grace, Augustine referred to the conflict of these two, sin and grace, the various phenomena of human conduct.<sup>1</sup> If a man yielded to temptation, it was the victory of sin; if he overcame temptation, it was the victory of grace. Between these two opposite determining forces, the individual self passed nearly out of sight. Moreover, the elements of character, which form the will, were seen by Augustine partly to be inherited, and partly derived from circumstances over which a man has no control. From such considerations he was led on, by a logical process, to speculate on the original condition of man. While he argued that sin in Adam's posterity was the transmitted consequence of Adam's disobedience, he was not content to stop at the fall of man as the goal of his inquiries. "Why did Adam fall?" he asked; and found an answer in the theory which is called the Augustinian doctrine of predestination. His speculations arising out of this abstruse question traversed the whole field of moral and mental philosophy, and led him to conclusions from which all but the most extravagant of his disciples in subsequent ages have refrained. The eternal decree of God, ordaining part of mankind

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<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, i. 7.

to eternal life, and the rest to eternal punishment ; the operation of irresistible grace in the elect ; the gift of final perseverance in holiness, were the chief articles of Augustine's doctrinal system. While Augustine himself thus gave the rein to his eager intellect, the Pelagian controversy was tried on simpler issues. Those who followed him as their leader in opposition to Pelagius, did not of necessity commit themselves to the developments of his doctrine as to predestination and election. But his views were in all respects congenial to the African clergy.

The Pelagian controversy centred on the word "grace," as applied in Holy Scripture to the spiritual gift of holiness. Augustine and his party held the doctrine with which the English Prayer-book is penetrated, that the continued help of the Holy Spirit is necessary to enable man to think, or wish, or do what is good. The Pelagians thought that this doctrine allowed too little merit or virtue to man. Without altogether excluding the acknowledgment of divine grace, they magnified the freedom of the will, and argued that the doctrine of human liberty and responsibility which they held was in harmony with Scripture ; whereas, they argued further, the Augustinian doctrine was inconsistent with the goodness of God, and immoral in its practical tendencies, by denying all merit to well doing or blame to ill doing. Such were the chief elements of the dispute. To enter fully into particulars of the Pelagian controversy would be



out of place in a history of the African Church. For it belongs to the history of the Church Universal; its scale is world-wide, and it branches off into questions which not only pervade theology, but spread out into other studies beyond.<sup>1</sup>

In Africa itself the Pelagian doctrine took no lasting hold. The clergy in a body supported Augustine. It was, in fact, rather under pressure than of his own accord that he wrote his first treatises on the subject. The religious feeling of the African Church was shocked by the novel doctrine of Cælestius, which represented original sin as an open question; and Augustine gave dogmatic form and coherence to the faith of his brethren.

In the course of this controversy, both parties appealed to Rome, for different reasons. Cælestius made appeal against the sentence of the African bishops, as having done him injustice. Orosius, with the approval of Bishop John of Jerusalem, proposed that the question should be referred to the Bishop of Rome, as one which required knowledge of Latin.

The African bishops also wrote three letters to Innocent, the Bishop of Rome, after their condemnation of Pelagius, and requested him to concur in the sentence. One of these letters was in the name of sixty-eight bishops of the province of Africa, assembled in synod at Carthage; a second

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<sup>1</sup> See Mozley, *Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, for a full discussion of the Pelagian controversy.

from sixty-one bishops of the province of Numidia, assembled in synod at Milevum; the third was from Augustine, in the name of himself and four other bishops, Aurelius of Carthage, Alypius, Evodius, and Possidius. This last was a private letter, explaining more fully the whole matter, and accompanied by copies of the treatise of Pelagius on free will and the answer of Augustine. Thus, at the period of the downfall of Rome as a city, the Bishop of Rome was placed in a position of eminence as an arbitrator, which he had never enjoyed before. Innocent was glad to avail himself of this fortuitous distinction, and to represent it as a proper tribute to the authority of the Roman see.

He replied to the five bishops: "We have read through the book said to be written by Pelagius, and have found in it many propositions against the grace of God, nothing that pleased us, and scarcely anything but what displeased us." In his formal answer to the two synods, he condemned Pelagius, Cælestius, and their followers, provided they did not renounce their errors. But Innocent died a few weeks afterwards, in March, A.D. 417, and the matter was left to be dealt with by his successor Zosimus, under whose episcopate the budding pride of ecclesiastical Rome received a severe check.

Cælestius presented himself before Zosimus, and requested to be heard in his own defence. The trial took place in the ancient church of St. Clement, in the presence of the assembled Roman clergy,

and of several bishops from other places. The result of the examination of Cælestius was in his favour, and the case was adjourned for two months, in order to communicate with the Church of Africa. Meanwhile letters arrived at Rome from Pelagius himself, and from the new Bishop of Jerusalem, Praylius.

Both Cælestius and Pelagius declared their orthodoxy, and repudiated all that had been condemned by the Church as heresy. The letter of the Bishop of Jerusalem, John's successor, was favourable to them. These representations prevailed with Zosimus, and he followed up the letter which he had written to the Church of Carthage with a second, in which he censured the precipitation with which the African bishops had acted, in going beyond the proper limits of theology, and in passing sentence too hastily on men of blameless life.

Aurelius, the Bishop of Carthage, did not submit to this rebuke. He called together a Council, at which the African bishops were assembled in the imposing number of 214. Having despatched in all haste a letter to Zosimus, begging delay until a Council could be summoned, the African bishops drew up a declaration of faith, to which they prefixed a resolution that the sentence pronounced against Pelagius and Cælestius by Pope Innocent should still continue. They also retorted on Zosimus the accusation of being too hasty.

Numerous as was this Council, it was not suffi-

ciently representative of the whole African Church to carry the united weight of the entire body, and another Council was summoned in the following year. At this plenary Council, as it was called, the numbers were not greater than before, but the members, drawn from the most remote districts, gave an extraordinary importance to their assembly, which met on May 1, A.D. 418.

Along the whole southern coast of the Mediterranean for more than a thousand miles, from the sultry land of Tripolis, the home of the Lotos-eaters, to the slopes of the Western Atlas, which faced the open Atlantic, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the prelates of all the African provinces left their homes to meet together for deliberation at Carthage. Even the more distant part of Mauretania, which was adjacent to Spain, and was reckoned as part of the civil district, or diocese, of Spain, sent bishops to be present on this momentous occasion. Every cause which could tend to excite deep and strong emotion in human hearts was abundantly supplied by the circumstances under which this Council was assembled.

The question to be debated was one which had arisen on their own African soil, and had since filled the world with controversy. It had assumed the form of a dispute between the ancient rivals, Rome and Carthage. The Bishop of Rome had unexpectedly shown a disposition to stand by men whom the synods of Africa had repeatedly condemned as heretics.

Nor were more private grievances wanting ; for the tone of Zosimus and his predecessor Innocent, in writing to the Bishop of Carthage, had betrayed an arrogance which the Africans hotly resented. Zosimus had told them they were too hasty : Innocent had addressed to Aurelius, a few years before, a letter of reproof for ordaining illiterate men.<sup>1</sup> Bishops, he said, were elected so carelessly, that complaints of it were in every one's mouth. With such words fresh in their memory, the bishops at Carthage were in no mood to bear Roman dictation on a question of doctrine, on which they felt, with legitimate pride, that the ablest living defender of the faith was their own Bishop of Hippo. But above all these causes for excitement was that which the very subject of the controversy suggested. In minds which are deeply religious, there is always a desire to glorify God in comparison with man ; and the question which was now at issue, when put in its most obvious form, was whether human goodness was to be attributed to man's merit or to God's grace. The alternative admitted no doubt, when the question was presented to such an assemblage and under such circumstances.

The normal state of mankind is to be conscious of free will ; but there are abnormal states, exalted or depressed, in which the consciousness of free will is suspended ; either when the soul, exalted by

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiii. 34.

enthusiasm, becomes, according to the comparison of Montanus, like a chord struck by a player's hand, and so passing out of sight in its vibration ; or else when a collapse of vital energy seems altogether to paralyze the will, and the mind ascribes to destiny a coercion which is an excuse for torpor. The Church in Africa was to have experience of both extremes, but at the present time the souls of the bishops at Carthage glowed with an ardour which was not the less vehement for being attributed by them to a Will not their own, a Divine inspiration which moved them.

Two bishops presided over the Council, Aurelius of Carthage, and Donatian of Telepte, the Primate of Byzacena. The object of this arrangement was, no doubt, to allay the ancient jealousy which was felt in the rural districts, where the clergy were always in fear that Carthage might become what Rome actually became. It was not, however, to either of the two presidents that the Council looked for guidance, so much as to Augustine. Most of those present had seen him before, and had heard him argue, point by point, against the Donatists with admirable temper and skill in the conference of A.D. 411. He stood before them now, with the augmented dignity of a reputation which the Universal Church had learned to confirm. His voice, his language, his gestures were trained by long practice to convey effectively to his hearers the emotions of his own fervid soul ; and the theme on which he had to speak was one on which he had

more cause than most men to feel intensely. To no one, looking back to his youth, and reflecting on the change which had passed over his soul, could the Apostle's words, "By the grace of God I am what I am," appear more vividly descriptive of a spiritual result, which nothing but the most unreserved acknowledgment of Divine Grace could express.

His hearers were men of the most various degrees of culture. Some were highly educated, and had a large share of the artificial refinement of the declining empire. Others were uncivilized bishops from the hill country, who could neither read nor write,<sup>1</sup> mitred savages. Educated and uneducated alike were carried along with Augustine's eloquence; and the articles of the Council relating to Pelagianism bear the impress of his mind in almost every word.

They were nine in number, and their substance may be stated as follows:—That Adam's death was the penalty of sin, not the mere necessity of nature; that infants are born in sin, and require remission of sins in Baptism; that there is no middle state to be assigned to those who die unbaptized; that grace is required, not only for remission of past sins, but for power to do well in future; that grace enables man not only to know, but to love and do what is good; that grace is not only helpful, but indispensable; that saints need for-

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxi. 13.



givenness; that the words of St. John, and those of the Lord's Prayer, which imply the need of forgiveness, are said, not in humility, but in truth. The Council pronounced anathema on any one who should affirm the contrary of these propositions.

Having thus tracked Pelagianism through the various arguments and ambiguities of language by which its defenders had hitherto maintained their orthodoxy, the Council proceeded to enact several Canons of discipline. Two points in particular engaged their attention: the adjustment of dioceses and churches, in consequence of the reconciliation of Donatists; and the right of appeal. As to the former, it was enacted that negligent bishops should be deprived, and their churches added to the dioceses of their more zealous neighbours. As to the latter, appeals were allowed to the clergy from the decision of their own bishop to the bishops of the neighbourhood, and finally to the Council of Africa, or the primate of the province; "but whosoever shall appeal beyond the sea, shall not be admitted to the communion of any person in Africa."

A committee was then appointed, consisting of fourteen members, to settle matters of detail, and the members of the Council returned home. However high may have been their estimate of the work in which they had been engaged, it is not likely to have exceeded the deliberate judgment of posterity. The acts of the Council of Carthage

arrested the advance of Pelagianism, at a moment when both the Eastern and Western Churches of Europe were inclining to approve, or at least to absolve, Pelagius and those who held with him. From that moment a new turn was given to the controversy ; and the main definitions of the African Church were recognized, before long, as part of the doctrine of the Church Universal.

Zosimus did not wait for the official report of the proceedings of the Council. He sent for Cælestius, to examine him again, and Cælestius, prudently seeing in this invitation a change of purpose in the pope's mind, fled from Rome. Thereupon Zosimus pronounced sentence without delay, confirming the judgment of his predecessor, Innocent, against Pelagius and Cælestius, and adding that if they abjured their errors, they were degraded to the rank of penitents ; if they persisted, they were excommunicated. He wrote a letter to the African bishops, in which he discoursed at length on original sin, and the constant necessity of grace, in harmony with the Council of Carthage ; and he caused this letter to be circulated, not only among the Western Churches, but in Egypt and the East.

Most of the Italian clergy submitted to the sentence of the pope. The first to pronounce an anathema against the Pelagians was the presbyter Sixtus, afterwards Bishop of Rome, who had been formerly a friend and champion of Pelagius. It might be observed already in the Church of Rome

that dogmatic questions were held in subordination to the principle of ecclesiastical unity. The action of Zosimus in regard to Cælestius appears to have been dictated by considerations of expediency, whether it was better in the interests of the Church that he should be absolved or condemned. When the latter course was taken, the clergy of Rome, loyal to their bishop, renounced the Pelagian doctrine as heretical.

There were, however, eighteen bishops, of whom Julian of Æculanum was the chief, who took the part of Pelagius, notwithstanding the sentence of deposition which was pronounced against them, and which was followed, according to the imperial law, by a sentence of banishment. While Pelagius himself endeavoured, by guarded and ambiguous terms, to explain away his difference of doctrine, Julian took a bolder course, claiming the Fathers of the Eastern Church as Pelagians, and impugning the doctrine of Augustine as leading to impious consequences. Julian carried on the dispute with vigour, and elicited from Augustine, in reply, a treatise, which is his most complete work against Pelagianism. In this treatise he answers the objections which were made by his opponent to the doctrine of original sin, and quotes extensively from Fathers of the Eastern Church—St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and others, whose authority Julian had claimed on his side.

Constantius III., brother-in-law of Honorius,

ordered the banishment of the Pelagians to a hundred miles from Rome. He is supposed to have acted under the influence of the African bishop Alypius, which appears likely from the fact that, during his short reign of six months, he was led by some African counsellor to order the demolition of the ruined temple of Cœlestis at Carthage, a goddess who was known to the Phœnicians as Tanith, to the Jews as Ashtoreth, and to the Greeks and Romans as Juno. The particular cause for this demolition was the prevalence of an oracle that the temple was to be rebuilt, and the worship of the goddess restored. The site was cleared by digging up the foundations, and made into a cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

The Pelagians appealed from the sentence of Carthage and Rome to a General Council, and reproached the Catholics with being afraid of the result. Augustine insisted that their case had been fully heard and finally decided.

During the later years of Augustine's life, he was drawn into other disputes which arose out of the Pelagian controversy. One of these began from a quarrel in the monastery of Adrumetum, on the coast of the province of Byzacium, whence Rome derived a great part of her supply of corn. One of the monks objected to the doctrine of grace,<sup>2</sup> that "if God worketh in us both to will and to do, our superiors ought to be satisfied with

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiv. 21 ; see p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xxiv. 47.

instructing us and praying for us, without correcting us when we fail to do our duty." Augustine composed a treatise in answer to this objection, entitled *On Correction and Grace*, in which he reconciles his doctrine of grace with the exercise of discipline by punishment. Grace is given, he explained, by various means, of which punishment is one.

A more extended and important development of the Pelagian controversy is that which sprang up in Gaul, and which bears in ecclesiastical history the name of semi-Pelagian.

In the south of Provence, along the genial coast of the Mediterranean, which is now the winter resort of the invalids of Northern Europe, are several islands, on which communities of monks had taken refuge from the temptations and violence of the world. Chief among these was Lérins. There, under the shade of olives and spreading pines, theology was studied with a diligence which raised the monastery of Lérins to a high renown as a seat of learning. Among its members were some of the most distinguished bishops in the early history of the Gallican Church: Honoratus, more familiarly known as St. Honoré, St. Hilary of Arles, St. Lupus of Troyes, and others, besides monks like St. Vincentius, who spent their whole life in the monastery. The questions of grace and free will were agitated at Lérins as elsewhere; and the brethren saw danger to morality in the extreme negation of free will, which was inferred from the writings of Augustine by disciples more unguarded

than himself. At the monastery of St. Victor, near Marseilles, the same views were held more decidedly. On the other hand, this attempt to reconcile grace and free will was denounced as a modification of the heresy of Pelagius by the zealous Prosper of Aquitaine, afterwards papal secretary, who appealed to Augustine to refute it. He wrote on this invitation two treatises, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, in which he addresses the semi-Pelagians with fatherly kindness.

The history of semi-Pelagianism is beyond the limits of Augustine's life and the interests of the African Church. Prosper endeavoured to obtain a condemnation of the "Massilians" by the pope, and was unsuccessful. In later times a reaction came. Opinions which would not have been tolerated in the days of Augustine crept into the Church insensibly; and passages were found in his voluminous writings to give them countenance. He had, in fact, used arguments against the Manichæan Fortunatus and others which implied a somewhat different conception of free will from that to which he was ultimately led by his study of the questions raised by Pelagius. In the first revival of learning in the Middle Ages, Duns Scotus and his followers went far towards reviving the tenets of Pelagius, while Thomas Aquinas maintained in a more cautious form the doctrine of Augustine. At the period of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin were zealous Augustinians; while the Council of Trent



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recognized human free will and merit to a degree which Augustine would have censured.

In the great Protestant controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, which came to an issue at the synod of Dort, the two parties represented in a limited measure the difference between Augustine and Pelagius. In the great Catholic controversy in France between Jansenists and Jesuits, the same question was debated under new conditions.<sup>1</sup> Yet none of these disputants was willing to surrender Augustine to those who claimed him for the opposite side. And while some of his more profound speculations are, for all time, matters of unsolved inquiry and inconclusive debate, there are certain definite positions, as to which Christendom, since his time, has been at one. The ninth and following Articles of the Church of England, to the end of the seventeenth, express a doctrine which substantially is that of Augustine, and which owes its form chiefly to him. It is a singular tribute to Augustine's genius, that Rome herself should have relaxed in his favour the profession of infallible wisdom which has been from early times a tradition of her policy. He alone has ventured with impunity to indite a letter to the

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<sup>1</sup> Mozley, *Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 413, says, "I see no substantial difference between the Augustinian and Thomist, and the Calvinist doctrine of predestination." Pascal maintained that the Jansenist doctrine of grace was the same as Augustine's. The Jesuits maintained that it was not Augustine's, but Calvin's.



Bishop of Rome, accusing him of haste, and bidding him reconsider his judgment. Many a theological reputation has been blasted for having provoked the jealousy of the Roman see. But Rome, like Carthage, felt the mastery of Augustine's mind, and has always been proud to claim him as her own.

Pelagianism was formally condemned by the General Council of Ephesus, in A.D. 431, under the name of the heresy of Cælestius. Pelagius had died some years before; and Augustine, whom the emperor honoured by a special summons to the Council, did not live to receive the message. It was not for some time afterwards that the followers of Pelagius made their submission. They were particularly strong in his native country, Britain. A special mission was sent from Gaul to reclaim them. Among the native clergy, St. David, the patron saint of Wales, was distinguished by the zeal which he displayed in the Catholic cause.





## CHAPTER XV.

### VANDAL CONQUEST OF AFRICA.

AT the great Council of Carthage in A.D. 418, the African Church reached the culminating point of its history. Never again was Africa to hold the same commanding eminence in the sight of all Christendom. On two subsequent occasions only, similar Councils were held at Carthage, in A.D. 419 and in the year following; and the interest of these was comparatively local, the question at issue being the independence of the African Churches compromised by the appeal made to Rome by a priest, Apiarius, who had been deprived for his conduct. Zosimus, with his usual indiscretion, allowed Apiarius to appeal to him from the bishops of his province, and was about to give judgment in his favour, when the matter was unexpectedly settled by a confession of guilt by Apiarius himself. The most notable episode in this case was the dispute between the pope's legate, Faustinus, and the Bishop of Tagaste, Augustine's life-long friend Alypius. Faustinus read the instructions of the

pope, in which was inserted a Canon, quoted as one of the Canons of Nicæa, by which a bishop deposed by a provincial Council was allowed to appeal to Rome. On hearing this, Alypius interrupted the reader and said, "We do not find these words in the Greek copies of the Canons of Nicæa." After some discussion, the meeting was adjourned for further information; and it was found eventually that the Canon which had been quoted was not passed at Nicæa, but at the less authoritative Council of Sardica, at which Roman influence predominated.

Meanwhile, the troubles of the Roman Empire were increasing, and began to involve the African provinces in the same misery as the rest. The imperial governor, who bore the title of Count of Africa, was Boniface, one of the two men who, by common consent, were worthiest to take up the reins of empire which were falling from the weak hands of the descendants of Theodosius. His great military skill and his incorruptible justice were celebrated throughout the Roman Empire. But he had a rival in Aëtius, afterwards famous for his victory over Attila. Aëtius, who had studied the arts of the court no less than those of the camp, ingratiated himself with the Empress Placidia, who governed as regent for her son, the young Emperor Valentinian. A message was sent to Boniface, summoning him home from Africa. At the same time, Aëtius sent a private message, advising him not to return. He therefore disobeyed the summons:

and the object of Aëtius was attained when Boniface was declared to be a rebel. Forced in this manner to consider the means of self-defence, he looked round him for support ; and in a fatal hour bethought himself of inviting the Vandals as allies into Africa.

Of a kindred race to the Goths, the Vandals had taken part in the great southward migration of the German tribes ; and, turning aside to Spain, had penetrated to the extremity of the Peninsula. They were now in possession of the district which still bears the name of Andalusia after them. Their leader, Genseric, whose genius for war and policy overcame the obstacles of lameness and illegitimate birth, readily accepted Boniface's invitation, and crossed the Straits at the head of eighty thousand men. Meanwhile Boniface, discovering his rival's fraud, had made his peace at the imperial court, and wished to be rid of his new allies. But they would take no refusal, and after defeating Boniface in Numidia, besieged him in the city of Hippo in the year 430.

Augustine had resigned the active duties of the bishopric of Hippo a few years before, but he continued to reside there, constantly employed in writing and study, notwithstanding the infirmities of age. He was in his seventy-sixth year, his intellect unclouded, and his force of character unimpaired, though his bodily strength was failing. He had suffered much vexation from the conduct of a young bishop, Antony, whom he caused to be

ordained to take charge of Fussala, an outlying town of the diocese of Hippo. The district was full of Donatists, and the post required more than ordinary courage as well as ability. Antony was a reader, who had been brought up under the eye of Augustine, and had the valuable qualification of speaking the Punic language. But in his new position he made himself intolerable to his people. Charges of oppression, and even of immoral conduct, were brought against him; and the synod of Hippo, while dismissing the graver charges, resolved that he was unfit for his office. He submitted at first, but afterwards appealed to the pope, between whom and Augustine a correspondence followed, in which the question is argued whether a bishop could be deprived of his jurisdiction, without being deposed from his episcopate. Eventually, the Church of Fussala was re-joined to Augustine's diocese; but the whole course of the proceedings afflicted him greatly. He reproached himself for his imprudent choice, and implored the pope to have compassion on the people of Fussala, by not sending back this bishop to them. The right of appeal to Rome, as founded on the alleged Canon of Nicæa, was at this time in suspense, and Augustine throws himself on the pope's compassion. "The danger in which I see both parties involved casts me into so deep a melancholy, that I think of resigning the episcopate, and spending the remainder of my life in bewailing my error."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiv. 34.

Between Augustine and Count Boniface there was a cordial friendship. Several of the most important letters of Augustine are addressed to Boniface, whom he had formerly dissuaded from retiring to a monastic life, urging upon him that he was qualified to serve God more effectively in the world. Boniface had since disappointed him, by taking an Arian wife, and by falling into the voluptuous habits which were common among African governors. But their friendship had continued unbroken, and cheered both under the calamity which brought them together.

The Vandals overran the country with the impetuosity of a herd of buffaloes, destroying more than they consumed, and leaving a track of desolation behind them. Unfortified cities, which offered them no resistance, were sacked with a ferocity which seemed to take as much pleasure in ruin as in plunder; and their improvident recklessness made havoc of the crops and fruit trees which consideration of their own interest would have taught them to spare. Forests of noble cedars, which were highly prized at Rome for the furniture of palaces, were consumed by fire, to the permanent loss of the country.

The clergy, in their dismay at the fury of the Vandal invasion, consulted Augustine, whether to fly, or to remain to the last in charge of their flocks. Opposite texts from Scripture were urged: "When you shall be persecuted in one city, flee to another;" and on the other side: "The hireling



fleeth, when he seeth the wolf coming." He wisely answered that when the danger was general, the clergy should remain; but if one pastor in particular was marked out for persecution, he should fly, taking care to leave others behind in his place.

In the third month of the siege of Hippo, Augustine died, on the 28th of August. The last act of his life was to request his friends to hang the penitential Psalms by his bedside, where he could see and read them.

Shortly before Augustine's death, he completed a survey of his literary works, under the title *Retractationes*, of which a wrong idea is conveyed by the similar English word "Retractations," sometimes used as equivalent. The original simply means "revision," and does not imply the withdrawal of what has been written before. In fact, although Augustine takes occasion here and there to modify former statements, and to correct faults of style, the retrospect which he took of his writings was in general a confirmation of them.

To the end of his life he was learning, unreserved in acknowledgment of his past errors, and willing to recognize the limitations of his knowledge. A young Mauretanian, Vincentius, who could not understand this humility, once wrote a treatise on a subject of which Augustine confessed himself ignorant, and insolently applied to him a verse from the Psalms, "Man being in honour hath no understanding, but is compared to the beasts that perish." Augustine only replied, with the gracious



courtesy which he could maintain through all the asperities of controversy, "I will not return railing for railing; but I admonish him as a son, to confess that he knows not that which he knows not, and not to attempt to teach that which he has yet to learn."<sup>1</sup>

A characteristic story which Augustine tells of himself has been a favourite subject with artists.<sup>2</sup> He was walking along the sea-shore, meditating on his treatise on the Trinity, when he saw a child pouring water into a hole which he had made in the sand. As the child continued to bring water from the sea, he asked him what he wanted to do. "To pour the sea into that hole," the child said. "That is impossible," said the bishop. "Not more impossible," said the mysterious child, "than for you, Augustine, to explain the Holy Trinity in a book."

Although he spent a large part of his energies in controversial writing and speaking against Manichæans, Heathens, Arians, Donatists, and Pelagians, it was not less congenial to him to meditate on those passages of Scripture which are purely devotional. The Psalms were his favourite study; and he delighted in the mystical method of interpretation which he had learned from Ambrose. His speculations on the destiny of mankind led him, by an unrelenting process of logic, to infer the eternal reprobation of the greater number, including

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iv. 353.

<sup>2</sup> An example, by Garofalo, is in the National Gallery.

the majority of infants. But the tenderness of his heart was in contradiction to his rigid theories. Charity was in him, not, as it has often been in others, a mere theological phrase, but a warm affection of humane sympathy, inseparable from the love of Christ.

The power of Augustine's eloquence was shown, not only over educated audiences, but over the wild people of Mauretania. He persuaded the Moors of Cæsarea (the modern Cherchel) to abolish their custom of a faction fight, which had continued from time immemorial. At a fixed time in every year the citizens divided themselves into two bands, and fought for days, parents and children being sometimes on opposite sides. When he spoke first, they merely applauded; but soon tears began to flow, and the "Caterva," as it was called, was not renewed.

Augustine's personal habits were simple, without austerity. Unlike some of those who devoted themselves to an ascetic life, he wore linen and shoes. "I applaud your courage," he said to those who went barefoot; "do you bear with my weakness." He used to entertain his clergy in his house, keeping a hospitable though frugal table. As a rule he used a vegetable diet, adding meat only for his guests. The furniture of the table was of earthenware, wood, or marble, except the spoons, which were of silver. His table bore an inscription against evil speaking of the absent, a rule which he did not hesitate to enforce, if necessary, with

indignation, threatening to leave the room when it was broken by some bishops who were dining with him. Women were not allowed to visit his house ; even his sister, a widow and an abbess, was excluded.

He was very indifferent to money, and would not receive for the Church legacies which ought, in his opinion, to have been left to the relatives of the deceased. In times of extremity, through famine and war, he melted down the sacred vessels to obtain the means of relieving the poor and redeeming prisoners. More than once he declared his willingness to resign all the endowments of the Church, and depend entirely on voluntary contributions for himself and his clergy. He could securely have relied on voluntary offerings. The affectionate veneration of which he was the object, was not] confined to those who were near or to those who were far off. Citizens of Hippo who knew him in his daily life loved him, while the whole Church honoured him. His life was a ceaseless round of occupation. What time he could spare from his other duties was consumed by appeals to his arbitration in quarrels, requests for letters of commendation or letters of advice, so that he seemed to lead many lives in one.

An extraordinary scene took place at Hippo, four years before his death, when he summoned the people to meet him in the Church of Peace, and recommended to them as his successor the priest Heraclius, or as he is called, Eraclius ; for the un-

educated Africans were apt to drop the aspirate. Augustine observes, in his *Confessions*, that grammarians thought more of pronouncing "homo," "omo," than of hating their neighbours.<sup>1</sup> On this occasion, he could hardly obtain a hearing for the clamorous ejaculations of the people, at one time giving praise to God and Christ, at another crying, "Long live Augustine!" then, twenty-six times, "We thank you for your choice."

With Augustine passed away the glory of the African Church. His transcendent ability set a wide interval between himself and those who were nearest to him. Moreover, the terrible blow which coincided with his decease, falling most heavily on the most devoted pastors, weakened the strength of the Church. Its subsequent history is not unimportant nor uninteresting, but it falls into a secondary place; and is more illustrious henceforward for suffering than for action.

The siege of Hippo lasted fourteen months, during which the Vandals cut off the communications of the besieged by sea, as well as by land.<sup>2</sup> Time was thus given for an imperial army to be sent to the aid of Boniface; and a second great battle was fought, in which the Vandals were again victorious. After this defeat the cause of the empire in Africa appeared hopeless. Boniface fled to Ravenna, leaving the province to the enemy, who spread misery everywhere. When Hippo fell, there

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<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, xxv.

remained only Carthage, except the almost impregnable city of Cirta, or Constantina.

The Moorish hill tribes descended from the valleys of the Atlas range in large numbers, and joined the Vandals; and the surviving remnant of the Donatists rose against their persecutors, making common cause with the invaders.

It was no mitigation, but an aggravation of the sufferings of the Church at this time, that the Vandals were not heathens, but Arians. They had received the doctrines of the Christian faith in an Arian form, by means of the preaching of Ulfilas, during the time when Arian bishops held the see of Constantinople. Probably the rude Goths and Vandals had, for their own part, little appreciation of the difference between their doctrine and that of the Catholics: and if their clergy had been willing to confer with the Catholic clergy, as Apollos conferred with Aquila,<sup>1</sup> infinite sorrow might have been averted. But there was in the Arian clergy little of the spirit of Apollos, and in the Catholic clergy as little of the spirit of Aquila. Beginning with mutual antipathy and denunciation, they fanned into flame the worst passions of those who fought on their side. The victory of the Vandals set loose in all the African provinces, among those four or five hundred Churches whose bishops had taken part in the Councils of Carthage, a brutal cruelty which was in some respects worse than the

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 26.

persecutions of pagan times, under Decius and Diocletian. For then the Christian Church was to some extent still a secret society, the members of which could easily elude observation if they desired. Now, however, there was no concealment for the weak or the timid; and such was the savage temper of the Vandals, that many would be tempted to deny their faith under fear, and to no purpose.

For those who dared to suffer the utmost, martyrdom was no longer the public testimony before God and man which it had been, when Perpetua was exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre. Society was now utterly disorganized; the brave man and the coward, the godly and the godless, perished side by side, with few to look on as spectators, or to make lamentation as mourners. When the smoke rose up from the charred ruins of a city full of corpses, no human tongue could tell what profession of faith had been made by those who died.

Moreover, the martyrdom of those who were put to death for their faith by the Arians was not invested with the same intensity of moral enthusiasm as that which is illustrated by Tertullian's *Apology*. Although there was in the Arianism of the Goths and Vandals, as in that of the Greeks, a compromise with heathen ideas, their morality was in principle that of the New Testament; and in practice their simplicity and purity of life put to shame the profligate citizens of the empire, who had been forced into an insincere profession of Christianity by Theodosius and his successors.



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Genseric made peace with the Romans in A.D. 435, and occupied the most fertile part of Africa in undisputed sovereignty. Four years later, on October 19, A.D. 439, he made a sudden assault on Carthage, while Aëtius was in Gaul, and gained possession of the city by surprise. Carthage was full of refugees, who had found security and comfort there, while the rest of Africa was scarcely habitable. Thither had fled, from all parts, the rich proprietors of estates, with any moveable wealth which they could rescue from spoliation; there were also crowds of fugitive clergy, flying from a persecution which was specially directed against them; and there were probably also many of the families of Roman senators, who had taken refuge in Carthage, when their own city was taken by Alaric.

The conqueror showed special animosity against the nobles and the clergy. He seemed to regard them as having done him a wrong, by withdrawing themselves and their possessions out of his reach. He seized all the valuables upon which he could lay hands, tortured those whom he suspected of having hidden treasures, and sold the noblest Carthaginian men and women for slaves.<sup>1</sup> Having first plundered the churches, he quartered his troops in them. The Bishop of Carthage, who bore the name of *Quodvultdeus*, or *Godswill*, after a fashion similar to that which the English Puritans adopted, was embarked, with a large number of

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, xxxiii.



the clergy, on some unseaworthy vessels, in which they, nevertheless, arrived at Naples.

A fire which broke out in the taking of Carthage destroyed a large part of the city, including some of the principal streets. The theatres, the churches of St. Celerina and the Scillitan Martyrs, the Basilica Majorum, and the Temple of Memory were utterly destroyed ;<sup>1</sup> and it is doubtful if they were all rebuilt, for the city began rapidly to decline after this disaster.

Carthage, swelled beyond its usual numbers by the circumstances which preceded its capture, was at no time more populous or more wealthy. According to the testimony of Salvian, a monk of Marseilles, whose judgment was not without theological bias, no city was more corrupt, and he looked upon its fall as a signal example of divine wrath. The citizens were addicted to every kind of vice. Paganism, though nominally renounced, was practised secretly, and many who presented themselves at the Lord's altar offered private sacrifices to Ashtoreth. Men were to be seen in the streets in women's dress, with their faces painted. No monk could appear in the streets without being assailed with ridicule, hissed at, and reviled. Salvian asserts that the Vandals, though treacherous and savage, made a salutary reform in the morals of Carthage, by suppressing open licentiousness. He commends the Goths, Vandals, and Saxons for their chastity,

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<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 51.

and contrasts them favourably in this respect with the citizens of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The principal churches of Carthage were soon afterwards given by Genseric to the Arian clergy. Of these churches the chief was that which bore the name of the martyr St. Perpetua, but was commonly called Restituta, from having been recovered from the Donatists.<sup>2</sup> It was the cathedral church of Carthage, and was originally a temple of Baal, or Apollo, before its dedication as a Christian church.<sup>3</sup> There were also two large and magnificent churches dedicated to St. Cyprian, outside the walls, one built on the spot where the saint suffered martyrdom, and the other over his grave in the suburb Mappalia. Not only were the Catholics deprived of their buildings for public worship, but they were forbidden to use hymns at the burial of their dead.

A humble petition was made to Genseric by the bishops and clergy from various parts of the province, to be suffered to dwell unmolested for the comfort of their flocks. They had been deprived of their churches and their wealth, and only begged leave to live in his dominions. He replied angrily, "How dare you make such a request? I will leave none of your name or race." His attendants with difficulty restrained him from ordering the suppliants to be thrown into the sea.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiv. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xx. 24.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Sainte-Marie states that the palace of the Minister of Marine at Carthage is near the site of this church.—*La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 17.

Among those who suffered death for their religion at the hands of Genseric, was Count Sebastian, son-in-law of Boniface. Resistance being useless, he swore allegiance to the Vandal king, and served him faithfully ; but when Genseric told him that the continuance of their friendship depended on his submission to Arian baptism, he refused, answering by a parable : " If it is good for a loaf of bread to pass a second time through water and fire, then it may be good for me."<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to form an adequate conception of the cruelties and indignities to which the bishops and clergy were subjected. Their ill treatment was of every kind and degree, from mere rude insult to death and banishment. What was undergone by those who suffered least, was indignity the more painful for the high-bred culture of the sufferers. We have in Alypius, Bishop of Tagaste, a specimen of a class which was probably numerous. His early life, related by Augustine, is full of interest. He was a few years younger than Augustine, a native of the same town, and a son of one of the principal inhabitants. " He studied under me," Augustine says,<sup>2</sup> " when I began to teach in our own town, and afterwards at Carthage ; and he had a great regard for me, because he thought me learned and good to him ; and I had the same for him, because of his capacity for moral greatness, which was manifest at an early age." A disagreement between

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxvi. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, vi. 7.

Augustine and the father of Alypius separated them for a time, during which Alypius was seized with a passion for the spectacles of the Circus. One day, however, he came into Augustine's lecture-room, and it so happened that Augustine, without particular thought of him, spoke with biting sarcasm of the folly of those who were captivated by the games. Alypius took the words to heart, and frequented the Circus no more. He continued to study under Augustine at Carthage in his Manichæan days, and embraced the same heresy.

But he soon went to Rome to study law, the profession for which he was destined; and at Rome he was dragged reluctantly by some young friends to the Coliseum, to see a fight of gladiators. These exhibitions, though not unknown at Carthage, were neither so frequent nor on so large a scale as at Rome, and it appears from the story that Alypius had never seen one. He shut his eyes, and refused to look, until a great shout of the excited spectators at the fall of one of the combatants roused his curiosity. A glance showed him the prostrate gladiator in his blood. He could no longer take his eyes off the sight. "When he saw that blood, he at once imbibed a savage spirit, and did not turn away his head, but remained with fixed eyes, drinking in the intoxication of the spectacle." Gazing and shouting like the rest, he returned home a different man, and it was long before he was liberated from the thralldom of this new passion.

Alypius became distinguished as a lawyer, not only for his talents, but for his incorruptible integrity. While he sat as assessor to the court of the Italian Exchequer, the presiding judge was upheld by his resolution, in opposing an illegal request of a certain powerful senator, urged with the combined force of bribes and threats. He was at Rome when Augustine arrived there, and accompanied him to Milan ; after which they shared each other's most familiar confidence. They were baptized on the same day, returned to Africa together, and lived in the same fraternity, until Augustine was made Bishop of Hippo, and Alypius bishop of his native place, Tagaste. They laboured side by side in the Pelagian controversy, during which Alypius was sent twice to Rome. On the latter occasion he also went as an envoy from the Church to the Emperor Constantius. The Pelagians at Carthage accused him of having taken money and horses as presents to the imperial officers. His activity in the Catholic cause made him obnoxious to them, and it may easily be imagined that in the downfall of the Church he would be a mark for private resentment.

Another of the African bishops whose name occurs often in connection with that of Augustine, is Evodius of Uzalis, near Utica. He was also a native of Tagaste, and held an office under the imperial government at the time of his conversion, which preceded Augustine's. He joined the company of Augustine and Alypius a little before the

death of Monica, and was the first to comfort the mourners after her death, by taking up the Psalter and singing Psalm ci. : "My song shall be of mercy and judgment." Two of Augustine's treatises are written in the form of dialogues with Evodius. He was of a quick temper, which sometimes led him into imprudent actions. He suffered severe injuries at the hands of the Donatists, at a time when Restitutus and two other bishops were killed. The last occasion on which he is mentioned is in the controversy of the monks of Adrumetum, three years before the Vandal invasion.<sup>1</sup> It is uncertain, therefore, whether or no he lived to undergo the persecution of Genseric.

A third bishop of considerable distinction was Possidius of Calama, the biographer of Augustine. Alypius, Evodius, and Possidius were the three bishops who were associated with Augustine and Aurelius of Carthage in the important letter which was written to Innocent of Rome in A.D. 416, on the Pelagian heresy. His diocese was full of pagans, who still continued to hold the riotous processions of their ancient worship. On one occasion they pelted the bishop with stones, so that he narrowly escaped with his life. He had in his church some relics of St. Stephen, which were said by Augustine to have worked many miracles.<sup>2</sup> Possidius took refuge in Hippo at the time of the Vandal invasion, and was with Augustine in his

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxiv. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xxvi. 42.



last hours. Genseric deprived him of his church and banished him, because he refused to subscribe to Arian doctrines. So he passes out of sight, whether to spend the remainder of his days in exile, or to undergo worse hardships in Africa, is not known. There were some who escaped from the sword and fire of the Vandals, to become captives to the Moors ; and others who hid themselves in dense forests and mountain caves, only to perish of hunger.

The magnitude of the injury which was suffered by Catholic Christendom through the Vandal conquest, may be estimated by a comparison of the number of African bishoprics with those of the rest of the Universal Church. Such a comparison is necessarily imperfect, for the number of bishops was in some places much larger in proportion to the laity than in others ; and the statistics which are to be had are not all of the same period.<sup>1</sup> But the African dioceses appear to have been of average size, larger than those which were on the coast of Asia Minor, and smaller than those of Gaul or Spain. They were at the time of the Vandal invasion about five hundred in number, which was more than a fourth of the whole number of bishoprics in Christendom. There were in all about four hundred in the part of Asia between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ; about four hundred more in Syria, Palestine, and the Eastern provinces ;

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<sup>1</sup> See Bingham, *Antiquities*, book ix.



about one hundred in Egypt, under the Patriarch of Alexandria ; rather more than a hundred in Greece, Italy, and Gaul respectively ; and less than a hundred in Spain and in the British Isles, respectively making the total number of bishoprics in Europe about five hundred. These figures, though only approximate and taken from a later time, will serve to convey a just idea of the relative importance of the African Church in the fifth century, when its clergy and people were crushed by the brute force of the Vandals. If we pass from numerical comparison to the more indeterminate measure of the weight of learning and authority, the African Church will appear not less, but greater.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### VANDAL PERSECUTIONS.

THE voice of the African Church, which had been so clear and resonant up to the time of the Vandal conquest, sank after the fall of Carthage into a low wail of lamentation, like that of the mourners whom Genseric forbade to sing hymns at the funerals of their friends. No successor to Bishop Quodvultdeus in the see of Carthage was appointed for fifteen years, during which the conqueror endeavoured to impose Arianism on the clergy and people. It was necessary for his purpose to force the clergy first into submission; for the Arian priests who accompanied his army were few in number, unlearned, and little acquainted with the Latin language. His large ambition aspired to found a mighty kingdom. He began to establish an orderly government in the rich territory which had fallen into his power. He divided the lands of proconsular Africa among his soldiers on a plan analogous to the feudal system; employed the artificers of Carthage and the other seaports to

build him a fleet ; and entered into negotiations with the Emperors of the East and West. Nevertheless, he failed to control the religion of his subjects. The three great basilicas which he took for the Arian worship continued to be mere garrison churches, from which the Christians of Carthage turned in aversion to any meeting-place in which they could be safe from molestation.

Meanwhile, the provinces of Mauretania, the first to feel the storm of Vandal invasion, and the first to recover from its passing fury, required ecclesiastical supervision, and were not unwilling to put themselves under the care of Leo, the Bishop of Rome. Leo wrote to them, enjoining that, notwithstanding the difficulties of the time, greater strictness should be used in the choice of bishops. No one who had taken a second wife, whether the first were living or dead, should be eligible ; nor should laymen be raised at once to the episcopate. Though the cases in which this had been lately done, under stress of necessity, might be excused, they were not to be taken as precedents.

With the decline of the Western Empire, the Bishops of Rome had insensibly and steadily increased their power. The Roman see supplied a centre of unity to the Church, which had been wanting since the provinces of the empire had begun to fall, one after another, into the hands of the barbarians. The calamities of the city of Rome had tended, by reducing the authority of the civil government, to exalt that of the bishop ;

and in Leo the see was filled at length by a prelate whose personal qualities were adequate to his high position.

Hitherto the Church of Rome had held a secondary rank among Churches in respect of the theological attainments of the bishops. Only the greatness of the city had preserved them from insignificance ; and on several occasions they had been all but misled into grave errors of doctrine. The heresies of Montanus, Praxeas, Arius, and Pelagius would have found a footing at Rome, had not the undiscerning judgment of the bishops been guided by the intervention of strangers. Praxeas saved the Roman Church from Montanism : the heresy of Praxeas was in turn exposed by Tertullian. Pope Liberius, yielding to coercion, had lapsed into Arianism, when Athanasius alone upheld the Catholic faith of the West. Zosimus had been prevented by Augustine from committing himself irrevocably to the doctrine of Pelagius. Nor had any pope before Leo been eminent as a theologian. If Jerome had been elected, as he hoped, on the death of Damasus,<sup>1</sup> it would not have been reserved for the fifth century to see, for the first time, a great theologian in the papal chair. As it was, Leo was the earliest of those who, by the combined force of learning and character, have sustained the dignity of the see of Rome.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Fathers for English Readers," *St. Jerome*. S.P.C.K.

While Carthage was without a bishop, the fourth General Council was held at Chalcedon in A.D. 451, at which the legates of Pope Leo presided, and his letter to Flavian on the Eutychian controversy was heard with unanimous approval by an assembly of 630 bishops. In the following year, Leo won for himself the gratitude of Italy, by the courage and skill with which he encountered Attila, and dissuaded him from his intended invasion.

At length, in A.D. 454, Genseric allowed the Catholics of Carthage to elect for themselves another bishop, on the request of the Emperor Valentinian, whom he wished, for his own purposes, to conciliate. The election fell upon Deogratias. The occurrence of strange names ascribing praise to God, such as Deogratias, Quodvultdeus, Habetdeus, is characteristic of this period. It is likely that the names were assumed in zeal for the doctrine of divine grace for which the African Church had contended so earnestly. Deogratias, though an old man, was enabled by extraordinary circumstances to leave behind him a name for ever memorable, after a short episcopate of three years, during the Vandal reign of terror. He had not been for many months Bishop of Carthage, when the revenge of an injured woman brought about an event which had been the lifelong dream and hope of Hannibal. Rome was taken by an expedition from Carthage.

Rarely has the imagination of a romancer invented such a tissue of passion and crime as that which led to this catastrophe; and the particulars

may serve as an illustration of the state of Roman society in the last years of the empire. The Emperor Valentinian, having grown up to manhood, made choice of Rome for his residence. One of his favourite companions was Maximus, a member of the Anician family, whose many advantages of birth, wealth, and personal accomplishments made him the admiration and envy of his time. His wife was one of the most beautiful women in Rome; and Valentinian availed himself of the possession of a signet-ring, won from Maximus at play, to seduce her. She died soon afterwards. Her husband, dissembling his purpose of vengeance, sought for agents among the old soldiers of Aëtius, who resented the murder of their general, lately assassinated by Valentinian. Two of these, while attending on the emperor in the Campus Martius, stabbed him to the heart, and Maximus was immediately proclaimed emperor in his stead. On ascending the throne, Maximus, whether for policy, or pride, or retaliation, insisted on taking as his wife Valentinian's widow, Eudoxia. The indignant empress had no means of resistance, but she sent a secret message to Carthage, informing Genseric that Rome was almost defenceless.

Genseric required no second invitation. In a very short time the Carthaginian fleet was at the mouth of the Tiber, and Rome, as Eudoxia had foreseen, fell an unresisting prey into his hands. Maximus, who quickly lost as emperor the good name which he had won in a private station, was

bewildered by the emergency, attempted to fly, and was killed by the tumultuous citizens. No one had presence of mind to collect soldiers for any armed resistance to the Vandals. Only the bishop, Leo, confronted Genseric as he had confronted Attila, and pleaded with him for mercy upon the city. Stern as the barbarian was, he was not altogether unmoved by the influence of Leo. He promised to spare Rome from fire, and the people from bloodshed and torture. For fourteen days, however, the city was given up to pillage; and Genseric sailed home to Africa, his ships laden with captives of every rank, and with all the treasures which a deliberate search for booty could amass. Apparently the gleanings of the Vandals in Rome far surpassed the harvest which had been reaped there by Alaric and his Goths, less practised in spoliation.

Now it was that Rome felt the full bitterness of the indignity which she had formerly inflicted on cities fairer than herself, such as Corinth and Syracuse, in the loss of statues and other works of art, which the Vandal king carried off to adorn his capital. The plates of the roof of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol were stripped, leaving the most sacred shrine of the old religion dismantled, in the full view of the Roman Forum. A more precious treasure conveyed by Genseric to Carthage, was the seven-branched candlestick which Titus had brought from the Temple of Jerusalem. An image of this candlestick remains sculptured on the



triumphal arch of Titus at Rome ; and, by a curious coincidence, another image has been found at Carthage, engraved on the wall of one of the tombs in the great cemetery which lies to the north-west of the city, on the hill Gebel-Kawi.<sup>1</sup>

And now, when at length Carthage celebrated her long-deferred triumph over Rome, when the united army of Vandals and Moors returned with the most costly treasures, and with the prisoners whom they valued most highly, there must have been many whose thoughts turned back to the days of Hannibal and the Scipios. Had such an event occurred in those days, it is likely that Romans of consular and senatorial rank, with the fairest youths and maidens, would have been offered as human sacrifices in the Temple of Baal. But a far different spectacle was presented. Bishop Deogratias put himself, his churches, and his church plate, at the service of the captives.

When, in the division of the spoil between the Moors and Vandals, husbands were separated from wives, and children from parents, the bishop sold the sacred vessels to ransom those whose case appeared most urgent. He laid down beds and straw in the two principal churches which were under his control, the new church and the Basilica of Faustus, in which the great Council of A.D. 418 had taken place, to give shelter to the wretched captives, many of whom suffered greatly from the

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 464 ; Davis, p. 486.

hardships of the voyage. Not only did he supply them with medical advice and food, but he visited them with the physicians, and afterwards went the round of the beds at night, speaking to each patient.

The good bishop died in A.D. 457, so much beloved by his people, that he was buried secretly while they were at prayers, for fear that they should carry off his body. Genseric would not permit the election of a successor, and the see remained vacant for twenty-four years. By that time the number of bishops in proconsular Africa was reduced from 164 to three.

Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the history of the Church relapses into the legendary form, which is the natural result when tales of oppression and suffering pass by word of mouth, without the free publicity which sifts the true from the false in each narrative. The historians of that time, Victor and Ferrandus, had themselves passed through some of the scenes which they describe, but they had neither the opportunity to examine the facts which were related to them, nor the calmness of temper to weigh probabilities, where they had cause to believe in general that nothing was too horrible to be done by their persecutors, nor any wonder too great for the power of God.

In the tales of martyrdom which belong to this period it appears that the constancy of the sufferers was not less remarkable than in former times. There was a confessor, named Archinimus, whom

the king urgently solicited to renounce his faith, offering him liberal presents, until, made angry by his refusal, he ordered him to be beheaded. At the same time, he had a dread of making martyrs, and gave secret instructions to the officer that if Archinimus showed no sign of fear, his life was to be spared. If his courage failed, he was to be executed. He waited the blow unmoved, and was therefore let go. Another, named Armogastus, who had an honourable post in the service of the king's own son, Theodoric, bore torture with such wonderful fortitude that the prince wished to despatch him, but was dissuaded by an Arian priest, his chaplain, who said, "Do not behead him, or the Romans will celebrate him as a martyr." He was sent first to dig, and afterwards to keep cows in the neighbourhood of Carthage, that his degradation might be seen by those who knew him. Saturnus, the steward of the king's son, Hunneric, spoke freely against Arianism. His master threatened that if he did not become an Arian, his house and servants and children should be taken from him, and his wife married before his face to a camel-keeper. He refused, notwithstanding the pathetic entreaties of his wife and children, and was reduced to beggary.

At Regia the Catholics met for service at Easter in a church which had been closed. A reader was chanting "Alleluia," probably after the Gospel,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Newman, note on Fleury, xxviii. 59.

when he was shot in the neck by an arrow and fell down dead. Valerian, Bishop of Abbenza, who was eighty years old, refused to give up the sacred vessels and books of his church, and was cast out of the city to die, all persons being forbidden to give him shelter. The Vandals seized the church furniture when it was not surrendered, and made shirts and drawers for themselves of the altar linen.

The story of Martinian and Maxima is one of the most remarkable. They were slaves to a rich Vandal of the Millennarian sect, who wished them to marry. Maxima had taken a vow of celibacy, and persuaded Martinian to do the same. They took an opportunity to escape, together with three brothers of Martinian. Maxima found refuge in a convent, where she appears to have remained undiscovered. The four brothers were found and tortured. But signs of divine vengeance pursued the Vandal and his family. He died, and so did several of his children, his servants, and his cattle. His widow, anxious to be rid of so calamitous a possession as these slaves, gave them to a relative of the king, where similar effects followed. "A demon tormented his children and domestics." By the king's advice the four brothers were sent to a pagan king of the Moors, called Capsur, far off in the desert. On their arrival there they drew large numbers of the Moors to the Christian faith by their preaching. They were soon able to send across the desert for priests; a church was built,

and many of the heathen were baptized. Genseric, hearing of these things from Capsur, ordered the brothers to be tied by the feet to the back of chariots, which were driven through briars and brambles until they were torn to death.

Among the captives whom Genseric brought from Rome were the Empress Eudoxia, with her daughters, Eudoxia and Placidia. He gave the Princess Eudoxia in marriage to his son Hunneric, and sent the mother and sister honourably to Constantinople. His ambition was to make good by policy the position which he had won by war.

Two formidable attempts were made to dispossess him of his kingdom, one from the West, the other from the East. The heroic Emperor Majorian, in whom the ancient valour of Rome blazed out for the last time, prepared an expedition for the reconquest of Africa, on so grand a scale that Genseric sued humbly for peace. But the Roman fleet was burned treacherously in the harbour of Carthage, and the invasion was abandoned. Again, in the year 468, a great armament was fitted out under Basiliscus, brother-in-law of the Emperor Leo. A force which is estimated at 100,000 men sailed from Constantinople against Carthage, while another army from Egypt made a simultaneous attack on Tripoli. For a time the throne of Genseric seemed to be in jeopardy; but he deluded Basiliscus by negotiations, and suddenly availing himself of a favourable wind, attacked the imperial fleet with fire-ships by night, and threw it into disorder with

much loss. Thus the invaders were foiled ; and Genseric concluded his reign in prosperity, living to see the last Emperor of Rome deposed, and Italy formed into a Teutonic kingdom like his own, by Odoacer.<sup>1</sup>

Genseric died in A.D. 477, forty-eight years after his landing in Africa. Two years before his death, he consented, at the request of the Emperor Zeno, to mitigate the severity of his treatment of the Catholics ; but he did not consent to the election of another Bishop of Carthage.

The accession of his son Hunneric brought no benefit to the Church. His character differed from that of his father only for the worse ; equally violent and cruel, and wanting in the energy and grasp of mind which gives a royal dignity to Genseric.

At the beginning of Hunneric's reign he resolved to suppress Manichæism, but he desisted on finding that there was a large proportion of Manichæans among the Arian clergy. Their lax tenets permitted of their concealment under various denominations, and they were naturally inclined to choose that which enjoyed the king's protection. A little before this time, the Manichæans, who had fled in considerable numbers from Carthage to Rome, took part in the Catholic worship there ; and some were observed and recognized on the steps of the Basilica of St. Peter, turning round to adore the sun before they entered the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xxxvi.



The Manichæan doctrines were secretly held far into the Middle Ages. A story is told of Thomas Aquinas which shows how seriously they engaged his mind. He was sitting at table with the King of France, taciturn and absent, as his manner was, following the train of his own thoughts, when he suddenly struck the table with his great hand, exclaiming, "That argument is conclusive against the Manichæans."

Hunneric's ferocious disposition showed itself in his treatment of his own family and friends, when he discovered, or suspected, a conspiracy to supplant his son Hilderic in the succession to the throne. He put several to death, and made a signal example of the chief of the Arian clergy, Jocundus, who had assumed the title of patriarch, in imitation of the bishop at the imperial court of Constantinople. Jocundus was burned alive at Carthage, in the presence of a multitude who reflected anxiously, If the king treats his friends thus, how will he treat his enemies?

At the request of Zeno and Placidia, Hunneric gave leave for the election of a Catholic Bishop of Carthage in A.D. 481, stipulating that similar toleration should be granted to the Arians in the East. The African clergy, unwilling to be parties to this contract, and dreading a treacherous design, said they would prefer to remain as they were, without a bishop. But the eager desire of the people, to have the see of Carthage filled again, prevailed over the misgivings of the clergy, and Eugenius



was elected. The choice was both wise and popular. Eugenius showed himself in every respect fit for his important and arduous post. His church was crowded, not only with his own congregation, but with Vandals also. Of this the Arian clergy complained to the king. Hunneric, in a fury, gave orders that guards should be stationed at the church doors, who were to drag by the hair any persons in Vandal dress who should enter. They were armed with ugly instruments, with which they clawed at the heads of those who went in, tearing away hair and skin together.

The jealousy of Hunneric and his Arian counsellors tried next to defame the Church by scandalous calumnies. Consecrated virgins were seized and put to torture, to force them into confessions which might compromise the bishops and clergy. The indescribable suffering which they underwent did not conquer their fortitude, though in many cases it left them crippled and bowed with all the signs of old age.

At the close of the year 483, Hunneric summoned the Catholic bishops of Africa, to hold a conference at Carthage with those of the Arians on the 1st of February of the following year. This measure, which naturally recalls the Donatist conference of a century before, was not improbably suggested by the Donatists, and designed as an act of retaliation. The condition of the Donatists at this period lies in some obscurity. It is certain that the sect was not extinct, from the subsequent mention of them.

But they disappear for a time under this denomination; and it seems highly probable that they united themselves with the Arians under the Vandal dominion. They were able to supply what the Vandal kings most required, clergy who knew the people of Africa and their language. In return the Vandal kings could give them not only protection, but supremacy. The rebaptism of members of the Church, which was habitually practised by the Arians in Africa, was characteristic of the Donatists, but not usual among the Arians in Europe. All the proceedings of the conference which was summoned by Hunneric are in harmony with the supposition, that Donatist ministers directed the policy of an Arian king and primate who were too ignorant to shape their own course without such counsellors.

At the time when the Arian heresy was supported by imperial favour at Constantinople, a century before, the Donatists had refused the alliance of the Arians. But now Arianism came to them associated with deliverance from the imperial yoke, and a coalition of Donatists and Arians was not difficult; for the Donatists, having taken no part in the Councils of the fourth century, were unfamiliar with the dogmatic terms by which the creed of the Church had been defined and guarded against Arian equivocations.

A total eclipse of the sun on the 15th of January, a fortnight before the assembly of the conference, was thought to be significant of evil to come. But

the hearts of the Catholics were encouraged by reports of a miracle worked by the Bishop of Carthage. A blind man named Felix, well known in the city, recovered his sight at the touch of Eugenius. The number of bishops assembled was 464, including a few from the Balearic Islands. Some of the ablest, however, were absent; for Hunneric, with savage cunning, had made inquiries who were the most eminent, and had caused them to be thrown into prison on various pretexts.

On entering the basilica, they were surprised to see a lofty throne erected for the Arian primate, Cyrilus. Inquiry was made anxiously, "Who is to preside?" Instead of direct reply, the notary began to read, "The Patriarch Cyrilus has ordered——" when a cry was at once raised by the Catholics at this title, unfamiliar in sound, and assigning to the Arian Cyrilus a rank which no Bishop of Carthage had claimed. "By what right," they asked, "does Cyrilus bear this title?" Some time elapsed before the clamour and confusion subsided; then, at length, one of the ten "actores" or leaders of the conference, on behalf of the Catholics, requested Cyrilus to lay before them the programme of discussion. He answered, "I cannot speak Latin;" on which another outcry arose that he was uttering a falsehood. Debate being impossible, Eugenius handed in a careful statement of the doctrine of the Church, and the assembly broke up in disorder.

On the 24th of February the king issued an

edict, drawn up in the customary form, to the effect that the Homoousians, as the Catholics were termed by the Arians, had been indulged long enough; that they had by their conduct hindered the free discussion which the king allowed them; that they should therefore suffer punishment under the same laws which had formerly been decreed by the Roman emperors against their adversaries. Their churches were to be closed; all secret assemblies were forbidden; the ordination of bishops and clergy was forbidden; their books were to be committed to the flames; and a fine, of variable amount, was to be imposed upon any one who should harbour them. They were allowed a little more than three months, till the 1st of June, for submission, before this law was to be enforced.

Huneric soon found that his edict was likely to be ineffectual, and added harder terms, which his passionate temper suggested. Those who gave shelter to the recusant bishops were to be burned, with their houses and families. It was about this time that he met with a large number of the bishops, as he rode one day past the fish-ponds, in the western suburbs of Carthage. They were in a miserable condition, despoiled of all they possessed, deprived even of hospitable shelter, and unable to return to their homes. They appealed to him earnestly: "What have we done, that we should be treated thus?" The king only frowned, and ordered his horsemen to charge them. So they rode down the defenceless bishops, many of them

old men, scattering them or trampling them under-foot; and the king went his way. Presently a message came back to them, bidding them assemble in the Temple of Memory. They went, clinging to the slightest hope in their desperate circumstances. A royal messenger met them with a paper and demanded their signature.

“Sign this paper,” he said, “and you shall be sent home, and have your churches restored to you.”

“We cannot deny the faith,” they answered. “What is in the paper?”

“Swear to choose Hilderic, the king’s son, for king after his father’s death; and to hold no correspondence with any one across the seas.”

A debate arose among the bishops. The greater number were ready to purchase relief from persecution on these terms; but the more resolute excused themselves from signing, on the plea that Holy Scripture said, “Swear not at all.” The number of those who signed was 302. Forty-six refused. Both those who signed and those who did not sign found themselves victims of a cruel deception.

Those who made the promise which the king exacted were told by him that they had broken the commandment of Scripture by swearing at all; and, as being unworthy of their office, they were sentenced to work as serfs in farm labour.

Those who refused to swear were charged with disloyalty in refusing Hilderic for their king, and

were banished to Corsica. Besides these, twenty-eight bishops are said to have escaped by flight, among whom was Victor of Vite, the historian of this unhappy time. Eighty-eight are supposed to have perished, either by a violent death or by hardship.<sup>1</sup>

The reign of Hunneric came to an end in the same year. He was succeeded, not by his son, whom he desired for his successor, but by his nephew Guntamund.

Every class alike had suffered from Hunneric's barbarity, which spared neither age, nor sex, nor station. Victor describes the country as filled with sufferers who bore the marks of torture, having lost a hand, a foot, an eye, a nose, or having their limbs dislocated with being hung up by the arms with cords, and let fall with a jerk. Some of these victims were paraded before the Byzantine ambassador by Hunneric himself, in mere defiance. Among numberless cases of suffering, that of the martyrs of Tipasa is celebrated for the apparent miracle which ensued. Tipasa was one of the most distant cities of the Vandal kingdom, situated in Mauretania, and was remarkable for a royal tomb in the neighbourhood, invested with many mysterious legends, which gave protection to the persecuted Christians who sought shelter in its awful recesses.<sup>2</sup> A band of soldiers was sent by Hunneric to enforce conformity on the people of Tipasa ; and several who

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, iii. 205, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Séguin, *Walks in Algiers*.



refused had their right hands cut off, and their tongues cut out. Notwithstanding this mutilation, they were able to speak plainly. One in particular, who afterwards visited Constantinople, was made known to the Empress Ariadne, who took pains to satisfy herself of the reality of the miracle.

Huneric's successor was inclined, both by temper and by policy, to measures of conciliation. Without repealing former edicts, Guntamund connived at the meeting of the Catholics for worship, and in his reign they were at least free from molestation on the part of the government, an exemption which they felt thankfully after the horrors which they had recently undergone. The indulgence of Guntamund went so far as to restore to the Catholics the Basilica of St. Agileus, with the chapter-house and cemetery adjoining, that they might have one church to worship in. It must, however, be supposed that, in the reduced and outlawed condition of the Church, its members were at the mercy of those who bore ill will to them, for religious differences or otherwise, and that innumerable wrongs were suffered thus without redress.

Guntamund died in A.D. 496, after an uneventful reign of twelve years; and was succeeded by his brother Thrasimund, a prince of energetic character, who applied himself at once to the task of consolidating his kingdom by healing religious differences. He was an Arian, like the rest of the Vandals, and was resolved to maintain Arianism



as the State religion, but he hoped to bring the Catholics round by gifts and persuasion. His partial success in this policy excited the fears of the more conscientious members of the Church; and the hopes with which he began were soon found to be vain. An extraordinary incident which took place in the year after his accession, served greatly to strengthen the Catholics, and to discredit the Arians in a corresponding degree. The Patriarch Cyrilas, jealous of the reputation of his rival, Eugenius, for working miracles, bribed a man to feign blindness in order to be thought to restore his sight, by bidding him open his eyes in the presence of the people. At the critical moment, as Victor relates, the man was unable to open his eyes. The blindness which he had feigned was inflicted upon him really; and the confusion of Cyrilas was increased when the blind man demanded his pay, with many reproaches, in the hearing of the assembled spectators. Eugenius was then called for, and at his touch the man's sight was restored.

Thrasimund lost patience, and began to resort to threats and torture. He endeavoured to cut down the Church at the roots, by prohibiting the ordination of clergy; and, to make the prohibition more effectual, he deported to Sardinia no less than 120 bishops.<sup>1</sup> It was said that the relics of St. Augustine were conveyed from Africa at this time, and that they remained in Sardinia until the year 722,

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<sup>1</sup> The number is variously given. See Morcelli, iii. 241.

when they were taken to their final resting-place at Pavia.

The African Church, at the beginning of the sixth century, was in a more forlorn condition than it had ever been ; the shepherds banished, the flocks scattered. But at this crisis arose one of those men who are sent, like miracles, to sustain the fainting souls of the faithful on the verge of despair. In modern times the name of Fulgentius is comparatively little known, but in his own age he was revered as a second Augustine. The influence which he exercised on his brethren by his life and writings kept alive in them the assured hope that they were not forsaken by divine grace, but under a probation which would eventually be for good.

Fulgentius was descended from one of the senators of Carthage, who had lost all his property in the Vandal conquest, and saved his life by flight. After some years the interest of powerful friends obtained for the father of Fulgentius the restoration of an estate in Byzacena, to which he returned ; and here, at Telepte, Fulgentius was born in A.D. 470. As a child he was taught only Greek. His studies were Homer and Menander, and he did not learn Latin till afterwards. On his father's death, while he was yet a boy, he undertook the management of the estate, which involved the superintendence of a large staff of servants. His ability and social position were so distinguished, that he was appointed at an early age to the office

of procurator, corresponding to that of lord-lieutenant or sheriff of a county. Soon afterwards, however, he was seized with that sickness of the heart which drove so many men in that age to hide themselves from the world, and to seek peace and holiness in a monastic life. He resolved to become a monk. The gates of a monastery in his neighbourhood closed upon him for a time; and his widowed mother, wailing outside, begged in vain for an interview.

In A.D. 500 he visited Rome, and in A.D. 505 wrote two treatises on fasting and prayer. Three years later, the bishopric of Ruspe was vacant, and Fulgentius was elected to the office, notwithstanding the order of Thrasimund that no more bishops should be appointed. He was in consequence seized, beaten, and exiled to Sardinia, where he remained from A.D. 509 to A.D. 515.

Thrasimund was at that time growing old, and being desirous of peace in his kingdom, made another attempt to conciliate the Catholics. He sent for Fulgentius to Carthage, and entered into frequent communication with him, one result of which is a treatise in three books, addressed by Fulgentius to the king. This was written in answer to questions which the king sent him. He was not allowed to have a copy of the questions, but was ordered to reply to them at once after hearing them read; and it was with difficulty that he obtained a few hours in which to prepare his answer. He nevertheless praises Thrasimund for

showing a desire for knowledge which was unusual in barbarians. The Carthaginians hailed Fulgentius for the sake of his high reputation for learning and holiness, and also for his ancient family connection with the city. They were still more rejoiced to find in him an uncompromising disciple of Augustine, on the two great questions of doctrine on which they felt most deeply, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the doctrine of grace. Adversity had given a stricter and severer form to the opinions of the African Church on the subject of predestination ; and Fulgentius gave utterance to views of election and reprobation as rigid as those of Calvinist Puritans. It soon became evident to the king that his plans of reconciliation were hopeless, and that the presence of Fulgentius at Carthage was an obstacle to the peace which he sought. Accordingly, in A.D. 517, he ordered Fulgentius to be sent back to Sardinia, secretly, in order to avoid a tumult. This second banishment lasted until the death of Thrasimund, in A.D. 523.

Now, at length, after nearly forty years of waiting, the mild Hilderic ascended the throne. One of his first acts was to recall as many as survived of the exiled bishops. The people of Carthage greeted their return with acclamations. When Fulgentius appeared among them, the cries were redoubled. Hands were outstretched to touch him, heads bowed down to receive his blessing. It was raining heavily, and the citizens spread out their cloaks to form a canopy over the bishops'

heads, as they walked direct to the Basilica of St. Agileus, to offer thanks for their deliverance from banishment. At the church door they were met by the newly elected Bishop of Carthage, Boniface. The late bishop, Eugenius, had spent the closing years of his saintly life in exile. He died in Gaul, in A.D. 505. His successor is known as the compiler of a calendar of the saints and martyrs of the African Church.<sup>1</sup>

Fulgentius was accompanied to his see of Ruspe by friends, and met with torches, palm branches, and every demonstration of joy.

The long time which had elapsed without effective episcopal government, left many questions to be considered on the return of the exiled bishops. An early occasion was taken for the assembling of a Council, at which, however, only sixty bishops could be brought together. The chief question debated in this Council, which took place at Carthage, in A.D. 525, was the jurisdiction of bishops over monastic houses. Liberatus, the Primate of Byzacena, had asserted a right of interference in the monasteries of his diocese, which they were unwilling to recognize. It was decided that monasteries were not to be subject to the rules of clerical discipline, but were to be free, as they had been hitherto. This resolution was contrary to the fourth and eighth Canons of the Council of Chalcedon.

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.

From A.D. 523 till A.D. 530, the Church was engaged in the slow process of reorganization after the late calamities. A revolution in the palace, which took place in the latter year, threatened to bring back again the days of Hunneric and Thrasimund. The party at the Vandal court which resented the tolerance of Hilderic, took advantage of his ill success in war against the Moors to depose him. His cousin Gelimer ascended the throne, and dismissed with insolent scorn the ambassadors of the Emperor Justinian, who remonstrated at his usurpation. Hilderic was kept in close captivity, while Gelimer mockingly advised him to take refuge at Constantinople, if he could.

The eyes of the Catholics were now turned to Justinian, looking anxiously for help. It was known how he had defeated the Persians by the skill of his general, Belisarius; and many believed a rumour, which seems to have originated in the metaphor of a preacher, that a vision of St. Cyprian had been seen in the sky, promising a speedy liberation from the tyranny of the Vandals.

During this period of suspense Fulgentius died in A.D. 532. His body was worn out by persecution and by voluntary austerities. He was so devoted to monastic habits, that he refused to wear any but the simple dress of a monk, even when he officiated in church as bishop. The last years of his life were spent on the island of Circina, opposite Ruspe. His memory was cherished in the Church with peculiar tenderness. The self-devotion which he



showed in sharing the hardships of his brethren, notwithstanding the infirmities of a delicate and sensitive frame ; the constancy with which he resisted the solicitations of King Thrasimund ; and the meekness with which he gave way to senior bishops, when a higher place was offered to him as due by merit, all endeared him to those who already venerated him as a learned and eloquent champion of the faith. His friends were fond of tracing in his name a resemblance to his character, which, though fanciful, was not inappropriate ;<sup>1</sup> for he shed on the darkest hours of the African Church a light reflected from the splendour of her day of glory.

Another name of some note which belongs to this period, is that of Vigilius, Bishop of Thapsus, formerly the scene of victory of Julius Cæsar over Cato and the army of the Roman Republic. Vigilius has acquired a celebrity beyond his desert from the conjectures of some scholars, who have ascribed to him, on very slight grounds, the authorship of the Canticle "Quicumque," commonly known as the Athanasian Creed.<sup>2</sup> A treatise on the Millennium has been ascribed with more probability to him. There is nothing in the style of his known writings to make it probable that the Athanasian Creed was written by Vigilius ; and there is good reason, on the contrary, to believe that it was composed in Gaul, about sixty years before his time.<sup>3</sup> It has

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<sup>1</sup> *Vita Fulgentii.*

<sup>2</sup> See Gibbon, xxxvii. note 114.

<sup>3</sup> Waterland, *History of the Athanasian Creed.*



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been shown that the "Quicumque" was first known in Gaul, was composed originally in Latin, and probably between the date of Augustine's treatise on the Trinity, and that of the Council of Ephesus; that is, between A.D. 416 and A.D. 431. The choice of probable authors appears to lie between Vincentius and Hilary, both monks of Lérins, in which monastery special attention was given to the dogmatic exposition of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> The claim of Vigilius appears to rest entirely on the one dishonourable fact that he used to circulate his own controversial treatises as the works of Athanasius and Augustine, in order to impose on the Arians by the weight of their authority. It is not the least of the evils of persecution, that it is apt to impair the virtue of the persecuted, even if they have enough fortitude to resist to the death. The question at issue becomes paramount to all other articles of faith and duty. Justice, charity, truthfulness, in common with the whole circle of moral virtues, are injured by an excessive strain on the conscience in one particular direction. Still more natural than the deceptions of Vigilius, and no less lamentable, was the inclination of the Catholics to look forward to God's everlasting punishment as the merited doom of their enemies. Fulgentius, following in the steps of Augustine, wrote a treatise on predestination, in which, however, he lays more stress on human responsibility. "The

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<sup>1</sup> See Newman's note on Fleury, xxvi. 23.

death of impiety the sinner brings on himself by following the devil. God justly adds the twofold death, of the separation of the soul and body, and of eternal torment.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy, if it be even possible, for those who have never passed through a similar ordeal, to estimate the motives which conspire to lead the persecuted to desire that the cause for which they suffer may be vindicated by signal vengeance on their destroyers. Whatever vindictiveness may rankle in the blood by nature mingles with zeal for God's glory, and a righteous desire of justice, in such aspirations. The purely Christian spirit of the first martyr, rare at all times, becomes rarer in prolonged adversity. Considering the duration and severity of the Vandal persecution, it is not wonderful that the minds, like the bodies, of the sufferers sometimes showed scars from their spiritual conflict. The compassionate sympathy which is always given to those who lose life or limb in a good cause, may fairly be accorded also to those sufferers who became warped in character by the action of the flesh on the spirit, under circumstances of extraordinary trial.

The Vandal persecution of the Church had fallen chiefly upon the clergy, and had comparatively spared the monasteries. Thrasimund's rigorous measures, in banishing the bishops to Sardinia in order to prevent ordinations, had greatly reduced

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<sup>1</sup> Fulgentius, *De Prædestinatione*, i.

the number not only of the episcopate, but of inferior orders. Religion was driven to take shelter in the seclusion of monastic life ; and it was from the monasteries that the vacant bishoprics were chiefly filled afterwards. A new class of men were thus brought to take the charge of the African Churches, some of whom, doubtless, were not unworthy followers of Fulgentius, learned, devout, and gentle ; but who were for the most part deficient in knowledge of human nature, and in sympathy with the spiritual needs of the people. The monasteries at the beginning of the sixth century were in a somewhat inert and languid state, from which Benedict of Nursia roused them by his stricter discipline. Benedict's reform of monastic life began in Italy a few years after the return of the exiled bishops of Africa.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### AFRICA UNDER JUSTINIAN.

A CENTURY of ease in the warm climate of Africa greatly changed the habits of the Vandals. The chiefs, dwelling in the luxurious villas from which they had ejected the senators of Carthage, discontinued their martial exercises, and led an epicurean life, among orange groves and marble fountains, leaving all active exertion to the natives, their slaves, except when they roused themselves for the pleasures of the chase. Few of them cared much whether Hilderic or Gelimer should reign, whether Catholics should be oppressed or tolerated ; and they heard with languid indifference of the preparations which were made at Constantinople for another Vandal war.

Meanwhile a great change in the opposite direction had taken place among the Romans of the Eastern Empire, since the defeat of the incapable Basiliscus by Genseric. The government of Constantinople was administered with a firmness and energy to which there had been no parallel since

the death of the founder of the city. By every sign of political greatness, by distinction in arms, in arts, in legislation, and in wealth, the reign of Justinian stands out conspicuously above the ordinary level of those which preceded and followed. A splendour which is not due to the personal merits of the emperor, but to those who served him, invests his reign with a special magnificence in Byzantine history.

The emperor himself, with little that was kingly in his character, had one quality invaluable in a king, the discernment of ability in others ; and a prudent choice of ministers more than supplied his own deficiencies. In ecclesiastical matters he took an active part, with disastrous consequences ; but in his civil and military government he relied on subordinates, and seldom has any prince been served so loyally or so well. His chief minister, Tribonian, not only assisted him to raise an immense revenue, and to maintain peace and order in his dominion, but superintended the preparation of the great legal works, the Code, the Pandects, and the Institutes, which have associated the name of Justinian for all time with the ancient legislation of Rome. His two generals, Belisarius and Narses, rolled back the hitherto irresistible flood of Teutonic invasion from Italy, and repelled the Persians in Asia. The superior glory of Belisarius leaves to Narses the second place among Justinian's generals ; but there are few periods of history at which such victories as those which Narses gained over the

Goths, the Franks, and the Alemanni, would not have won for him the highest rank. Both of these warriors were content to be submissive servants of Justinian. Narses was a cunuch in his palace when he was selected for military command.

A great age is apt to develop excellence of many various kinds. So in this reign the arts and sciences were cultivated with more than ordinary success, especially engineering and architecture. One example is the Church of St. Sophia, "the Holy Wisdom," at Constantinople, which was rebuilt after a fire in Justinian's reign. This world-renowned church has not been surpassed in beauty by any later domed edifice, and has been surpassed in scale by very few.<sup>1</sup>

The general outburst of activity in the indolent court of Constantinople, at the beginning of the sixth century, is probably to be explained in part by the fall of the Western Empire in A.D. 476. After that event Constantinople became, what Constantine desired to make it, a new Rome, the centre of political life for the civilized world. The ability which in every state gravitates towards the capital, found its way Eastward from Rome; and an effect was produced on the Byzantines corresponding to that which was felt in the West a thousand years later, when Constantinople in its turn fell into the hands of a barbarous power, and the foremost Greeks migrated to Italy. In

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<sup>1</sup> Fergusson, *Handbook of Architecture*.

the fifteenth century the arrival of Greek scholars at Rome and Florence gave an impulse to the minds of Western Europe which was powerfully felt in the Renaissance, not immediately, but after the lapse of rather more than a generation. Similarly, the blood of the Romans seemed for a time to flow in the veins of the Byzantines, about fifty years after the fall of Rome. The impulse was not felt for long. During the reign of Justinian it gave a new aspect to his court; but in the next generation Constantinople relapsed into its normal condition of languor and frivolity.

When the project of an expedition to Africa was debated in Justinian's presence, opinions were divided. Voices were raised in warning against so perilous an enterprize. The distance was great for the slow navigation of the ancients. A year must elapse, it was said, between the departure of a fleet and the return of any tidings of its arrival. On the other hand, the advocates of war were supported by an alleged vision of an Eastern bishop, promising victory. The emperor pronounced for war, and a well-appointed army under Belisarius disembarked on the African coast near Leptis three months after their departure from Constantinople, in September, A.D. 533.

To Belisarius had been prudently entrusted absolute command of all the forces by land and sea. He exercised his authority with a combination of gentleness and military skill which caused opposition to melt away like snow before his path.



In the field his courage, his discipline, and his fertility of resource easily overcame the Vandal armies. In the cities he made himself beloved by his generous forbearance and strict fulfilment of his promises. Carthage received him with joy as a deliverer, as soon as he appeared at the gates on St. Cyprian's Day, as the people did not fail to note.<sup>1</sup> The Vandal king still kept the field, and mustered another army; but a second campaign reduced him to extremities, and he surrendered himself to Belisarius, who returned to Constantinople in A.D. 534, where his conquest of Africa was celebrated by the rare honour of a triumph.<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances of Gelimer's capture illustrate both Vandal and Moorish manners. It is said that he was concealed in one of the huts of a Moorish village, and that on being found by the lieutenant of Belisarius, he asked for a lyre, a sponge, and a piece of bread. Bread was not to be had among the savage people with whom he had taken refuge. The sponge was wanted to soothe his eyes, weakened by the sun's glare and by weeping. The lyre he desired, as a true son of the North, to console himself by music in his sorrow. When he met Belisarius, he burst into hysterical laughter, which the conqueror treated with grave indulgence.

From this time forward Africa was united to the Eastern Empire. The officers whom Belisarius left behind completed the conquest of the remote

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, ch. xli.

provinces in a few years, so far as to subdue the Vandals and Moors in the plains and drive them to fastnesses in the hills. The Vandals were almost extirpated, but the Moors waged an irregular warfare, which became formidable whenever and wherever the imperial government showed signs of weakness.

One of the earliest results of the successes of Belisarius was the restoration of the churches to the Catholics. As many as 217 bishops assembled in the Basilica of Faustus, under the presidency of Reparatus, Bishop of Carthage: a large number, if the severity of the Vandal rule is considered, but not half the number who came together at the treacherous summons of Hunneric, before the prohibition to consecrate new bishops had taken effect. At this Council, held in A.D. 535, the African bishops deputed two of their number to carry a letter to Pope Agapetus, renewing their interrupted communications with the Roman see. They also made a petition to the emperor that the Church property, which had been seized by the Vandal kings, might be restored. Justinian listened to them favourably, and issued an order to this effect to the prefect Solomon. But they soon became aware that they had not passed out of servitude into liberty, but from one master to another. In the theological disputes of Constantinople, unfamiliar to them for the most part, they found themselves in a new religious atmosphere, inimical both to freedom and to spiritual life.

The personal qualities of the Emperor Justinian are so inconsistent that a description of them appears almost contradictory. He has been compared to James I. of England in respect of his learning, his ecclesiastical studies, and his high notions of his sovereign prerogative, combined with a want of common manliness. This parallel is strengthened by some points of resemblance between his minister, Tribonian, and the Lord Chancellor Bacon. But it is inadequate to represent the wide range of Justinian's mind, his versatile talents, his sleepless industry, or the external splendour of his reign. Justinian's character, a strange compound of brilliancy and baseness, is illustrated by his choice of the low-born dancer, Theodora, for a wife. The choice showed alike his intellectual discernment and his moral obtuseness. Theodora, infamous for her profligate youth and her cruelty as empress, showed, on emergencies, the masculine courage of a Semiramis. Her force of character sustained her pusillanimous husband during a tumult, in which the old Church of St. Sophia was destroyed. After her marriage, she professed to be religious. She gave up a palace on the Bosphorus to be used as a penitentiary, and threw herself eagerly into the controversies of the time. The name of this bold, bad woman forces itself into ecclesiastical history in a conspicuous place, so widely and deeply was the Church affected by her restless spirit of intrigue.

The heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches, which

had been condemned by two General Councils in the East, while the Church of Carthage was in the first agony of the Vandal persecution, were still represented by two rival parties at the court, and their disputes were wilfully complicated by the wish of the disputants to lay snares for each other. Both Nestorius and Eutyches had long been dead; and as the anathema of the Church had been pronounced against them, their names were no longer used as party distinctions, nor were their respective doctrines maintained in set terms. But the acrimony of the ancient dispute survived, like an hereditary feud. The friends of Nestorius had avenged his condemnation at Ephesus by aiding to condemn Eutyches at Chalcedon; and now, after the lapse of eighty years, the Monophysites, who had taken part with Eutyches, sought an opportunity of revenge in their turn.

In the details of this period of Church history we see many conflicting elements, each separately adverse to the determination of truth, but counterbalancing one another. Party ambition, popular tumult, sudden movements and reactions, the predominant influence of individuals, whether theologians, emperors, or empresses, threaten for a time the perversion of Christian doctrine. Yet the labours of those men who strove for the truth sincerely, with prayer and much study, were not in vain. Through the chaos of factions certain principles of doctrine were slowly but solidly laid down, for a lasting inheritance of the Church.

For Christendom at large, the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon are memorable, as contributing to the definition of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ. Notwithstanding the rivalry and discord and passion which distracted the Church in the fifth century, these Councils were largely composed of truth-loving men, and were led to a conclusion which has been accepted by the unanimous consent of all Christian Churches for forty generations. The authority of the first four General Councils, acknowledged in the Church of England both before and since the Reformation,<sup>1</sup> was virtually recognized by the bishops assembled at Lambeth in 1867, from all branches of the Anglican Communion. Hooker has explained their permanent dogmatic significance in one concise paragraph of his *Ecclesiastical Polity*:<sup>2</sup> "There are but four things which concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ: His Deity, His manhood, the conjunction of both, and the distinction of one from the other, being joined into one. Four principal heresies there are, which have in these things withstood the truth: Arians, by bending themselves against the Deity of Christ: Apollinarians, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to His human nature; Nestorians, by rending Christ asunder, and dividing Him into two Persons; the followers of Eutyches, by confounding in His Person those natures which they

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<sup>1</sup> I Eliz. c. I, s. 36; see Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* viii. 2, 17.

<sup>2</sup> v. 54, 10.

should distinguish. Against these there have been four most famous Councils : the Council of Nice, to define against Arians, against Apollinarians the Council of Constantinople, the Council of Ephesus against Nestorians, against Eutychians the Chalcedon Council. In four words, ἀληθῶς, τελῶς, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀσυγχύτως, *truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly*; the first applied to His being God, the second to His being man, the third to His being of both One, and the fourth to His still continuing in that one Both : we may, fully by way of abridgment, comprise whatsoever antiquity hath at large handled either in declaration of Christian belief, or in refutation of the foresaid heresies."

While, however, the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon have this permanent dogmatic value, in the interpretations which they have given of the union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of Christ, guided in the highest matters by the highest minds, the shallow minds of party leaders at the time looked far less to principles of doctrine, than to the humiliation of their adversaries. Between the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Constantinople there was a continual rivalry, which appears in the controversy between Cyril and Nestorius, and in the retributive condemnation of Cyril's more violent successor, Dioscorus. The influence of the imperial court was exercised in the advancement or deposition of particular bishops, even when the emperor made no study of theological questions. St. Chrysostom, for instance,



was the victim of the malice of an empress. But these personal elements in controversy reached a height under Justinian, when the emperor himself professed to be a theologian, and the empress, seeking a new excitement in theology, brought into play the secret arts of faction and duplicity, in addition to all the influence which imperial power, remorselessly exercised, could give.

Such was the troubled state of the ecclesiastical world into which the African Church was drawn by means of the victories of Belisarius: a despotic government, in which court favour was supreme; a turmoil of incessant controversy, in which subtle formulas of doctrine were devised for purposes merely factious. The most sacred mysteries were handled by the irreverent Greeks with a skill resembling that with which parliamentary tacticians frame resolutions, having no object but the defeat of an adversary.

The latest phase of religious strife at court was a dispute concerning the orthodoxy of Origen, who had been dead nearly three hundred years. His writings, which even in his lifetime had been praised and censured beyond those of any of the early Fathers, had since continued more or less the subject of divided opinions in the Church. One ruling idea, the harmony of the Christian faith and true philosophy, governed his writings, and made them attractive in the highest degree to those theologians who held Christianity and philosophy to be compatible, and who could appreciate his



profound spiritual intuition. But his latitude of speculation was disliked and mistrusted more, in proportion as the dogmas of the Church were more clearly defined. The unguarded language of his treatise *On First Principles*, written long before the rise of Arianism and Pelagianism, appeared to countenance those heresies. Above all, his insistence on the truth that God is a Spirit brought to a head the antagonism of those who rejected him as a teacher, by offending the fanatical monks of Egypt, of the sect called Anthropomorphites. Of one of these, Serapion, it is said that when his friends proved to him the error of ascribing to God a human form, he cried, "Woe is me! You have robbed me of my God, and I know not whom to worship!"<sup>1</sup> These men, degraded by superstition as they were, exerted themselves with fiery zeal, till they drew together all who on various grounds were opposed to Origen. His mind, speculative rather than dogmatic, touched on the confines of many heresies, without losing in any his firm faith in Holy Scripture, to the study of which he contributed more than any man. Those who differed from him as to the Nature of God combined with others who differed from him as to the nature of the human soul and the ultimate restoration of the wicked, in a coalition at the head of which was Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria.

The Origenist controversy spread from Egypt to

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, i. 385.

Palestine early in the fifth century. Epiphanius of Salamis and Jerome, both of whom took an intermediate position at first, were led by the course of the dispute to take part with the opponents of Origen. At Constantinople the enemies of Chrysostom accused him of being an Origenist; and after his fall it continued to be a tradition at the court that sympathy with Origen and Chrysostom denoted a mind which was too little subservient to imperial dictation. As a result of this prolonged dispute, a local synod was held at Constantinople, in A.D. 541, at which the Origenists were condemned. The emperor was preparing for a more solemn condemnation, when the Origenists, with the connivance of the Empress Theodora, raised a new question which drew Justinian's thoughts away from Origen for a time.

Availing themselves of his known desire to establish uniformity of faith in the Church, they pointed out to him that he might reconcile the Monophysites by the simple means of an edict, condemning their chief adversaries, now deceased; namely, Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas. Of these Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia, was the most celebrated. He has been usually regarded as the founder of the rationalist school of interpretation of Scripture. As a friend and ally of Nestorius, he was especially obnoxious to the Monophysites. Theodoret, a man distinguished for learning, moderation, and piety, had been deposed by the disorderly Council known as the "robber synod" of Ephesus, as a

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Nestorian, and was hated by the Monophysites because of the wrong which they had done him. Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, was deposed, like Theodoret, by the same irregular assembly at Ephesus, and was reinstated by the General Council of Chalcedon. The real object of condemning him was to bring the Council which restored him into disrepute, without venturing formally to contravene its acts.

Justinian was flattered by a suggestion which fell in with his ambition as a ruler and as a theologian. Accordingly, he issued in A.D. 544 an edict, entitled *Of the Three Chapters*, pronouncing an anathema on Theodore and his writings, on the writings of Theodoret against Cyril of Alexandria, and on a certain letter ascribed to Ibas. The anathema was extended to those who should presume to interpret this edict as contrary to the decrees of Chalcedon.<sup>1</sup>

When the Edict of the Three Chapters was received in Africa, with an imperial order requiring the clergy to sign it, the independent spirit of the Church was roused. The African clergy had not been accustomed to the ecclesiastical despotism which experience had made familiar at the capital. Pontianus, Bishop of Carthage, replied boldly that the writings in question were unknown in those parts, and that the writers, being dead, stood before another judge. The deacon Ferrandus, biographer of Fulgentius, a man of great reputation for learn-

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iv. 254.

ing, being consulted by the Roman clergy, wrote an elaborate reply to the same effect, maintaining that if the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon were reversed in any single article, the authority of the whole would be shaken; that deceased persons were removed from human jurisdiction; and further, that no one whatever ought to demand a subscription of this kind. The Bishop Facundus, of Hermiane, distinguished himself among his brethren by the outspoken freedom of his language, in a treatise which he wrote against the tyrannical proceedings of the emperor. "Everything," he says, "has its proper place and persons. We do not hear the anvil ring at the weaver's, nor are ovens heated there for baking. Theology alone is held in such contempt that it is not supposed to have any school or masters of its own, but those who have never studied think themselves most qualified to hold forth." He reproached those bishops who yielded to the fear of the emperor's displeasure, or were corrupted by the hope of his bounty; and added, significantly, that if God should now raise up another Ambrose, there would not fail to be another Theodosius.<sup>1</sup>

This spirit prevailed among the clergy of North Africa. They stood firm for the most part in resistance to Justinian's edict; not for its particular contents, which they did not profess to understand, but for its usurpation of the authority which belonged

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, iv. 260.

to a General Council, and for its interference with the liberties of the Church. A synod at Carthage pronounced a strong censure of those who subscribed the edict, which they justly regarded as at variance with the decrees of the last General Council. Taking their stand on this impregnable ground, and exercising according to ancient principles the power of local discipline, the African bishops cut off from communion Vigilius, Bishop of Rome, who had reluctantly consented to subscribe. Vigilius was in an unhappy position. He was compromised by a pledge which he had given to the empress before his election; and the intimate friendship of Theodora with Antonina, wife of Belisarius, who at this time commanded in Italy, gave her a secret control over the pope. The plots of Justinian's court, like the proverbial pool of Camarina, may with advantage be left undisturbed.

In A.D. 551, Justinian summoned bishops from North Africa to attend a General Council at Constantinople. Persuasions, bribes, and threats were employed to induce them to come. The governor of the province was ordered to ascertain which of the bishops were most likely to be amenable to the emperor's wishes, and to send them. Nevertheless, very few made their appearance. The Bishop of Carthage, Reparatus, and others whose attendance was desired, refused, and were deposed soon afterwards; nominally on charges of treason, which were brought against them by venal prosecutors before servile judges. In place of Reparatus,

his archdeacon, Primianus, who had signed the edict, was appointed bishop by a tyrannical exercise of the authority of the emperor. At this new injury the people rose in tumult, and blood was shed. In other cities also riots took place, in consequence of the deposition of the bishops. Among those who suffered deposition and exile for the assertion of their ecclesiastical rights was Victor of Tununum, who has left a history of the particulars.

Only five African bishops were present at the fifth General Council, which, after considerable delay, was held at Constantinople in May, A.D. 553. The pope, Vigilius, who had been brought with difficulty to Constantinople, found means under various pretexts of being absent from the Council. Its acts were substantially a confirmation of the emperor's edicts, both against Origen and against the Three Chapters. But the name of Origen was not expressly mentioned, and the censure of Theodoret and Ibas was limited to the particular writings which had been specified before by Justinian.

Vigilius submitted to the decrees of the Council, but died before he could return to Rome. In all parts of Christendom, especially in the great cities—Rome, Carthage, and Alexandria—the party spirit which was excited in the course of this controversy broke out into sanguinary riots. At Rome the oppressive treatment of the bishop by the emperor raised up a strong opposition to his successor, who obtained the see through imperial



favour. At Alexandria the party contests, a little before the Council, led to a frightful massacre and the destruction of a large part of the city.

The final development of the controversies of Justinian's reign was a doctrine which the emperor adopted in his old age, that the body of Christ was incorruptible, not really subject to hunger, thirst, and fatigue by its proper nature, but only by the act of His own will. As before, he embodied his opinion in an edict, and insisted on the subscriptions of the clergy. The Patriarch of Constantinople was banished for his refusal. The Patriarch of Antioch was expecting a similar sentence, when the tyrant, who was eighty years old, suddenly died, and the clergy were relieved from this burden on their conscience.

Justinian commanded the erection of many new churches in Africa. Two were built at Carthage, one being attached to the royal palace on the ancient citadel, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin; the other dedicated to St. Prima. A monastery was founded in the city, and another beside the harbour. Five churches were built in Leptis, and several in other towns. Thus, to some extent, the Vandal destruction was repaired. Sustained by hope and by the abundant bounty of nature, which the ravages of man had not been able to destroy altogether, the state of Africa revived. Nevertheless, the injuries which the country had suffered were, in a great measure, permanent, and the hopes which Justinian's rule



inspired were, in a great measure, delusive. Forests had been cut down and burned to an extent which dried up the rivers, and doubly impoverished the fertility of the land. The wild tribes of the Moors hovered round the abodes of civilization with increasing audacity. Justinian's lavish and unproductive expenditure in all parts of the empire required the levy of oppressive taxes, which discouraged industry, trade, and navigation; and corrupt ministers, by laying hands on the property of rich men immediately on their decease, checked the disposition to save. A sure sign of the moral degradation of the people was the sale of honours and offices, which was carried on to a scandalous extent.<sup>1</sup>

And now the freedom of the Church, which had formerly compensated for servitude in the State, was slowly extinguished by the Byzantine government. Little by little the old independence of the African Church was quelled. Patronage did what persecution had failed to do. Those who would have gladly undergone death or torture for their faith, yielded to the stealthy pressure of the despotism which, under the cloak of orthodoxy, promoted the servile and put to silence the free, until few or none were left to represent that noble race of Christians, of whom there had been an unbroken succession from the days of Tertullian to those of Facundus of Hermiane.

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xl.

The whole character and tone of religion, as exhibited at Constantinople, was dissimilar to that which had been prevalent in North Africa. Christianity at the capital was above all things a "Holy Wisdom," as the cathedral church was named. Christianity, both at Carthage and throughout the province, was above all things an emotion of devoted love to God. St. Augustine's famous sentence, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," might stand as a representation of the normal type of African religious sentiment; while that of Constantinople is not unfitly represented by a clause in the familiar prayer of St. Chrysostom, in which we ask for the knowledge of Divine truth. But there was more in common between these great men than between their followers. The African Christians in general were apt to imitate the enthusiastic self-surrender of Augustine, without his many-sided intellectual activity: and the Byzantine Christians were more inclined to praise Chrysostom than to imitate his virtues. A comparison of Augustine and Chrysostom is inadequate to illustrate the contrast between the character of African and Byzantine Christianity, caused by a difference of temperament in the people. Greek influence, the influence of the original Greek colony, predominated among the various elements of the population of Constantinople. An intellectual acuteness, as far surpassing the common standard of human intelligence as the sight of a bird excels human sight, is a leading

characteristic of the Byzantines. It appears in theology in a rare subtlety of metaphysical distinctions ; and in practical affairs it is no less evinced by a cunning too often used for purposes of deception. This acuteness of intellect was accompanied, for the most part, by a dullness of moral and religious sensibility, a want of that devotional fervour which was nowhere more conspicuous than in Africa. To the African mind, loving resignation to God's will was enough to make amends for many errors ; to the Byzantine mind, a right definition of the Being and attributes of God was the supreme good. The Africans set charity before orthodoxy, and in their zeal for the suppression of heresies were chiefly moved by an earnest religious purpose ; as, for instance, when Tertullian in a celebrated passage denounced the Bishop of Rome, as having, by his favour to Praxeas, "crucified the Father and put to flight the Comforter." The Byzantines not only held orthodoxy above charity, but went out of their way to find an intellectual exercise in discussing the problems raised by such writings as those of Origen, even when the lapse of time had made them antiquated. Their sensitiveness of intellect, and want of moral stamina, were morbid symptoms presaging sure decline ; but the concentration of political and military force at the capital gave an ascendancy not its own to the theology of Constantinople, which slowly chilled the warmth of African Christianity, during the sixth and seventh centuries.

While the habits of thought at the imperial court were uncongenial to the minds of African Churchmen, there was still less sympathy felt by the Byzantine emperor and clergy in those questions which were most vitally associated with the Christianity of North Africa, more particularly the doctrines of predestination and grace. On these subjects the Eastern Church had felt as little interest as the Western Church had felt concerning the speculations of Origen. The Council of Ephesus had indeed pronounced a condemnation of Pelagianism as the doctrine of Cælestius ; but it seems that this judgment was passed more in deference to the Western bishops present, than as the result of any real concern on the part of the Eastern clergy. At Carthage, on the contrary, the doctrine of predestination had grown to a magnitude which threatened to overshadow all other doctrines ; and the attitude which was assumed towards it by the imperial court, not impugning or denying, but merely ignoring it, was of all possible courses the most likely to depress the energies of the African Church. No important theologian rose after Fulgentius and the group of men, Ferrandus and others, who were his contemporaries. There are three distinct forms which predestinarian doctrines are apt to take, under different circumstances. In an age of vigorous growth, the consciousness of God's election works in the souls of devout men a superhuman energy, raising them above the weaknesses of nature to a marvellous degree. Under severe oppression and

persecution the same doctrine is felt more as an assurance of ultimate victory, through the divine reprobation of the wicked. But a season of tranquillity develops a third aspect of predestinarian doctrine, in which it appears as an argument for inaction. That faculty in man which is called the will, whether or no endowed with freedom, is, at all events in its normal state, an important factor in human affairs. Every form of industry, every art, every study, requires a persistent application of means to ends which is more continuously sustained as a habit by appeals to secondary than to primary causes, to natural rather than supernatural motives. The few men who are thoroughly spiritual will act in the least things as moved by a Divine energy of grace within them ; and this rule of life was urgently inculcated by African theologians. But whenever this high standard is not attained, the rule of life collapses all at once, and the doctrine of predestination becomes a doctrine of despair.

The apparent effect of the Byzantine dominion in Africa, in relation to this doctrine, was to discountenance it among the more educated classes ; while it was cherished among the illiterate members of the Church under much discouragement, lying dormant in their hearts, until the messengers of a new religion came, sword in hand, with predestination for one of the cardinal doctrines of their creed.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### STATE OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE MOSLEM INVASION.

UNDER the successors of Justinian, the history of the African Church is to a great extent absorbed in that of the Eastern Empire. Constantinople was not only the seat of government, whence orders were given to a local deputy, who bore the title of Exarch ; but, as the place of meeting, in or near which successive General Councils were held, the capital was the apparent centre of the orthodox religion of Christendom. The African clergy, who had suffered so much for their faith, looked to Constantinople with mingled feelings of gratitude for recent deliverance and reliance for actual protection ; and their voluntary attachment was strengthened by the policy of the court, which found means to show favour to the emperor's devoted servants, and to humiliate, on various pretexts, any who asserted rights of ecclesiastical independence.

Thus Carthage became subject to Byzantine

influences. From this time forward there is a perceptible change in the character of the history of the Church. The energy and fervour, the intellectual force and spiritual earnestness, which had hitherto distinguished North African Christianity, seem to subside into the winding stream of Eastern theology.

If the Byzantiné Empire were measured only by its duration, its constitution might fairly be regarded as a masterpiece of political wisdom. For it lasted in all eleven hundred years. But this prolonged existence does not represent any corresponding power or vitality. The real life of Constantinople—that is, the intellectual and moral life of the citizens—was as sluggish as the course of the rivers which flow into the Caspian Sea. In a course which is three times as long as that of the Rhine, the waters of the Volga have only one-tenth the fall; and this difference of rapidity corresponds to the stagnation of Constantinople after Justinian, compared with the restless, turbulent animation of Carthage before the Vandal conquest. There was indeed an occasional show of life, when the rivalries of the Court, the Church, or the Circus, provoked a riot; but, for the most part, the citizens sauntered through a luxurious and frivolous existence, maintaining the ancient repute of the original colonists of Byzantium, who were noted for their propensity to do as they liked, and their disinclination to take any trouble.

The subtlety of mind which distinguished the



Greek race was widely diffused among the inhabitants of the imperial city. Even the populace were only too ready to find matter of dispute in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. Profound questions of doctrine mingled incongruously in conversation with the affairs of the day ; and ecclesiastical controversies were associated with the factions which divided the spectators at the chariot-races. While, however, theology was debated with not less eagerness than the merits of blue or green charioteers, the general state of knowledge among the Byzantines, of those things which are within the range of human understanding, was contemptible. They were quite ignorant of the geography of the remoter parts of the empire, and extravagant fables concerning the inhabitants of Britain and Africa passed current with the best historians. Literature and science received no important contributions for centuries. Intellectually, the Romans of the Eastern Empire lived upon the accumulated capital of their former stores, and each generation found the stock diminished, as it received no fresh augmentation to compensate for the gradual fading away of the ideas and traditions of the past.

At intervals the pleasant ease of life at Constantinople was broken by a tumult, in which the fiercer passions of the populace raged with the ferocity of savages. For the moral culture of the citizens was far below the standard of their intellectual minds and refined manners. Too little had been done by

the clergy to impress upon the people the bearing of Christian faith on social morality. Intent on dogmatic controversies, they suffered their flocks to retain the vices of heathenism under a profession of Christianity, and sometimes were not ashamed to enlist the lowest rabble in acts of violence against their ecclesiastical opponents. In such riots it appeared for a time as if the whole order of society were dissolved ; but the storm passed over. Popular tumults, mutinies of the army, and predatory invasions of enemies from beyond the frontier, made but a slight impression upon the stability of the empire, sustained as it was by the iron framework of Roman law. The singular advantages of Constantinople for defence kept the city long secure from foreign enemies ; and the internal order of the State was preserved from revolutions by a system of laws, admirably devised and venerable from use, which restrained the citizens from mutual wrong, though necessarily powerless against the oppression of a despotic sovereign. Justinian's advisers had expunged from his Code all that they called seditious ; that is, all that breathed the spirit of ancient Roman liberty in the laws of the republic.<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of official religious intolerance began to appear before the death of Justinian. Sect after sect was formed in the Eastern provinces of the empire, and these, finding their doctrines persecuted

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. xlv. note 80.

as treasonable, availed themselves of any means of protection they could find. Persia gave shelter to the numerous and proselytizing sect of the Nestorians ; Armenia to the Eutychians. The Jacobites of Mesopotamia and the Copts of Egypt, both alike rejecting the Council of Chalcedon, were alienated from the Church and government at Constantinople. Among these sects the members of the orthodox communion were spoken of as the emperor's party. The name Melchites, or Royalists, a word of Syrian origin adopted into Greek, came into general use among the dissenters throughout the East, as a reproach to those Churchmen who took their creed from the Crown.

While the clergy were distracted by theological questions, in which the people at large could understand nothing but the names of contending parties and their leaders, the external forms of public worship were made more popular by increased splendour of ritual, and particularly by the religious use of images. In proportion as the spirit of reverence passed away from the contemplation of Divine mysteries, image-worship grew, beginning in the East and spreading towards the West. The primitive Christians shrank from representing Christ except under a symbolical form ; for instance, as the Good Shepherd. But pictures of the Virgin and Child, to some of which miracles were ascribed, became common before the end of the sixth century. Gregory the Great, at the request of a hermit, sent him pictures of Christ and the Virgin, and of the

Apostles Peter and Paul, and accompanied the present with a wise letter, in which he distinguished between the use and abuse of sacred pictures. "I know that thou desirest not the image of our Saviour that thou mayest worship it as God, but to enkindle in thee the love of Him whose image thou wouldst see. Neither do we prostrate ourselves before the image as before a Deity, but we adore Him whom the symbol represents to our memory as born, or suffering, or enthroned; and rejoice or sorrow accordingly by sympathy."<sup>1</sup> But such counsels of moderation were seldom heeded. The use of sacred pictures soon became a subject of fierce party conflict, exciting universal interest. Between the destroyers and the worshippers of images little place was left for an intermediate sentiment of pious veneration. The iconoclasts were borne down by superior numbers, after a sharp struggle; and images became more sacred in the eyes of their defenders for having narrowly escaped destruction.

The illustrious name of St. Gregory is brought into connection with the North African Church, by his endeavours to reconcile the Arians and Donatists. They appear to have shown considerable activity in Numidia, about the year 594; and from reports which came to him, he thought that the Numidian bishops were wanting in vigour.<sup>2</sup> He advised them to alter their custom of making the senior bishop

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<sup>1</sup> Nennier, v. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Morcelli, iii. 344.

primate, so as to insure that the primate should be bishop of one of the more important sees.<sup>1</sup> He wrote to two of them, Victor and Columbus, urging that a Council should be summoned, and requesting that another bishop, Paulus, should come to him at Rome immediately. He also wrote to the same effect to the Prefect or Exarch Pantalcon. Several of the letters of Gregory were addressed to a man of high rank, named Boniface, who had apparently been an Arian, and had wished for instruction in the Catholic faith for the removal of his doubts. Gregory invited him to Rome, saying that a personal interview would be more profitable than correspondence by letter. He added, "In all matters, but especially those of God, I desire to draw men by reason rather than by authority."<sup>2</sup>

Compared with many of his predecessors, Gregory had little authority in the affairs of the African Church. The annexation of the provinces of Africa to the Eastern Empire introduced a rival power, that of the Bishop of Constantinople, whose pride increased with the victories of Justinian, especially when Rome, with the rest of Italy, became subject to Justinian's officers. John the Faster, who occupied the see of Constantinople in Gregory's time, assumed the title of Universal Bishop, against which Gregory protested as an innovation, at variance with ecclesiastical precedent. No one, he said, ought to arrogate such a title to himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xxxv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory, *Epistles*, lib. iv. ; Morcelli, iii. 304.

It may be observed that the depression of the see of Rome by the overshadowing rise of Constantinople bore fruit in the West of inestimable value. Gregory's large mind, restrained in its free action on imperial ground, found for itself a new field in lands which were beyond the limits of the empire. He gained for the see of Rome an authority among the Goths and Franks and Saxons which was refused by the bishops and emperors of the East. In Spain he brought about the reconciliation of the Arians, and the establishment of the Catholic faith by the Gothic kings. In France he promoted the monastic reform of which Benedict of Nursia was the founder. In England he has a still more distinguished name, as having originated the mission of Augustine and his brethren to Ethelbert, King of Kent.

The latter part of the sixth century was a period of terrible calamity to the inhabitants of the cities on the coast of the Mediterranean from the visitation of the plague. Africa suffered more than Europe, and the seaports were the places which suffered most. During this pestilence, which began in the year 542, and did not altogether cease till A.D. 594, the mortality was so numerous, that it exceeded the powers of computation of the historians of that time, one of whom speaks vaguely of a myriad myriads of myriads.<sup>1</sup> How far Carthage and the adjacent cities were afflicted by

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<sup>1</sup> Prolopius, in Gibbon, ch. xliii. note 95.

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this calamity, may to some extent be inferred from the nature of the case. Carthage was inevitably exposed to all the virulence of infection by the traffic of the port. The crowded population, careless of sanitary precaution, were an easy prey to any epidemic. Scenes like those of St. Cyprian's time must have been of frequent occurrence, year after year; and the misgovernment of the province tended to aggravate the calamity. The Byzantine rule, which enriched the capital at the cost of the whole empire, weakened the vigour of local administration. In a prosperous state, the ravages of pestilence are repaired after the lapse of a few years. Thus Venice, in her best days, renewed her strength after many a desolating visit of the plague. But the citizens of Carthage had lost their former energy. The confidence which sustains commerce was shaken by the ruinous taxation of the empire. Even agriculture, the boast of Africa, declined; and the Moors overran unimpeded the rich plains of Byzacena, whose fertility was a wonder of the world. From the disastrous plague of the sixth century dates a rapid decline of the population. The ruins which are scattered over the face of the country mark the site of ancient cities, which were probably deserted at this time, never to be inhabited again.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the seventh century the interests of Christendom were for several years associated with

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<sup>1</sup> See the conclusion of Gibbon's forty-third chapter.



those of Africa, in connection with the eventful career of the Emperor Heraclius. His reign is an epoch in civil and ecclesiastical history, scarcely less memorable than that of Justinian, though its importance is of a different kind. Under him the Eastern Empire saw the last days of its majesty ; and, after a protracted and not inglorious struggle, was reduced to the narrow limits from which it never rose. The life of Heraclius has so many points of contact with the city of Carthage, and with the controversies of his time, that it forms a bond between the African Church and a complicated chain of events which was bringing on one of the mightiest revolutions in the history of mankind.

Heraclius was the son of an Exarch of Africa who bore the same name. His father received, in A.D. 610, a secret invitation from the senate of Constantinople, to come and deliver the city and empire from the tyranny of Phocas, a centurion who had been raised to the throne by a mutiny of the soldiers, and who had reigned with intolerable cruelty for nearly eight years. An army and fleet were equipped ; the former of which marched along the African coast, while the latter, commanded by the young Heraclius, sailed direct from Carthage. At the mast-head of his ship he carried images of Christ and the Virgin, whose aid he invoked on his expedition. For he came as the avenger of the blood of Maurice, the successor of a line of emperors, who had acquired a sacred character in

the eyes of the Eastern Church. The Byzantine princes after Justinian were regarded at Carthage chiefly as liberators, notwithstanding their despotic government. At Rome, on the contrary, the sense of their oppressive rule was predominant; and Gregory rejoiced in the usurpation of Phocas, before the vices of his character were manifest.

As soon as the citizens of Constantinople caught sight of the sails of the Carthaginian fleet, they rose tumultuously, seized Phocas in his palace, and hurried him in chains to a boat, which put off to meet Heraclius on his arrival. The usurper was beheaded after inhuman tortures, and Heraclius was at once elected emperor. Clergy and people united with the senate in soliciting him to take the vacant throne. He was about thirty years of age, endowed with brilliant but irregular genius, which sometimes exceeded, and sometimes fell far short of, the hopes which were formed of him.

Meanwhile another avenger of the murder of Maurice and his family had arisen in the East. The Persian King Khosru, known to the Greek historians as Chosroes, had been hospitably received in his youth by Maurice, and owed his crown to the aid of a Roman army. He declared war against the empire on the death of his benefactor, and was not inclined to pause in his victorious progress, when he heard that Heraclius had anticipated him. Thus, at the beginning of the reign of Heraclius, he found himself confronted by an enemy who had already torn from the empire the city of Antioch,

and was advancing rapidly. The new emperor was in no condition to defend Syria, being menaced at the same time by Tartar tribes from the north. Chosroes encountered no effective resistance as he overran the Holy Land, and established the Magian religion in Jerusalem. Thence he proceeded to Egypt, took the great city of Alexandria, and after destroying the Greek cities of the Cyrenian district, paused at Tripolis, and returned home in triumph. Another army, under his lieutenant, subdued the whole of Asia Minor, and encamped on the southern shore of the Bosphorus.

Compared with most Eastern conquerors, Chosroes deserves to be regarded as a civilized prince. He had an appreciation of Greek art and culture, inherited from his grandfather, Chosroes Nushirvan, who had protected the last of the Greek philosophers, when Justinian closed the schools of Athens. The palaces which Chosroes built for himself in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates were enriched, not only with the spoil of captured cities, but with the sculpture of Greek artists whom he carried off in his service.<sup>1</sup> He was a stern fire-worshipper; but policy led him to conciliate the Christian sects which were unfriendly to the Byzantine government.

Between the Persians and the Avars, Heraclius was besieged in Constantinople, with scanty means of resistance and insufficient provisions. In a fit

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<sup>1</sup> See Tristram, *Moab*.

of desperation, he resolved to transfer the seat of government to Carthage, and was on the point of embarking secretly, when his intention was discovered. His people extorted from him a solemn oath, which he took in the Church of St. Sophia, that he would live and die with them. He then sent an embassy to Chosroes, soliciting peace ; but the Persian king answered, "I will never give peace to the Emperor of Rome, till he has abjured his crucified God, and embraced the worship of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

On a sudden Heraclius turned on his enemies with a combination of valour and generalship worthy of Belisarius. Raising up the people of Asia Minor against the Persian invaders, he forced them to retreat ; he then carried the war into their own country, and after six campaigns, he finally defeated Chosroes in a great battle near Nineveh. In the following year Heraclius made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in order to restore to the Holy Sepulchre a portion of the Cross, which had been carried off as a trophy by Chosroes, and had been preserved by his Christian wife. For a short time the prosperity of Heraclius appeared to be complete. The extreme depression under which his reign had begun made his victories appear more glorious, and they were due mainly to his own heroic courage.

Ambassadors from all parts came to seek his favour ; among them one from the coast of Arabia,

bearing a message unlike the rest. The stranger's petition to the emperor was, that he should acknowledge his master, Mohammed, as the prophet of God. Arabia lay beyond the limits of the Roman empire, and was almost unknown to the ancient world. The people traced their descent from Abraham's first-born, Ishmael, and boasted of their immemorial freedom from foreign domination. Secluded, and almost inaccessible beyond the sandy deserts, they were rarely molested by the invading hosts which passed between Syria and Egypt, and for ages led without change the pastoral life of Bedouins. Their religion was for the most part a debased idolatry, the worship of sacred stones and trees, in part the worship of the sun, moon, and stars; but there was an intermixture of other religious ideas drawn from Jews and Christians. Some knowledge of the Old Testament was incorporated with early traditions of their forefather Abraham; and they had gathered from apocryphal Gospels a crude notion of the life of Christ, and His promise of the Paraclete who was to come after Him. These were the elements out of which arose the faith of Islam.

Mohammed was a member of the principal family of the city of Mecca, of the tribe of Koreish, the hereditary guardians of the Black Stone, which was said to have been in Paradise, and to have been brought by the angel Gabriel to Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Selections from the Koran*, p. 10.

But the father of Mohammed was poor; and the Prophet sought employment in the service of a rich widow, Kadijah, whom he afterwards married. To the end of his life he retained the simple habits of his nation, kindling his own fire, milking his ewes, and mending his clothes, when his armies were taking the spoil of palaces. He was forty years old when he began to announce that he had seen visions and received messages from the angel Gabriel. These revelations were written down at his dictation, and formed the *Koran*, or Book, which superseded all other books in the eyes of his followers. Mohammed himself could neither read nor write.<sup>1</sup>

The Koran begins with a prayer, which is recited several times a day by every Moslem, and has for them an authority corresponding to that of the Lord's Prayer among Christians. It is as follows:—"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the King of the day of retribution. Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, the way of those upon whom Thou hast conferred favour; not of those against whom Thou art incensed, nor of the erring." The concluding words are held by the Moslems to refer to the Jews and Christians; the former of whom Mohammed condemned, for rejecting Christ; the

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. I. note 70.

latter, for worshipping Christ as the Son of God. No chapter in the Koran is more characteristic, or more venerated by the Moslems, than that which says, "He is One, the Eternal. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten, and there is none equal unto Him."

The friends and neighbours of Mohammed were slow to receive his words, and the fiercest hostility which he encountered was from his own tribe, the Koreishites, whose zeal for the Black Stone of the Caaba was like that of the Ephesians for their image which "fell down from Jupiter."<sup>1</sup> Mohammed was driven from Mecca in A.D. 622, and the date of his flight, the Hegira, is observed as the commencement of the Mohammedan era. It was in the seventh year of the Hegira that Mohammed's envoy presented himself before the Emperor Heraclius, after the conclusion of the Persian war. Heraclius gave him so gracious a reception, that he is claimed in Arab legends as a convert.

In fact, the mind of Heraclius was engaged on a plan of religious comprehension, which he promulgated on his return to Constantinople. His Eastern campaigns had brought him in contact with members of various Christian sects, particularly Monophysites. He saw clearly how much the empire was weakened by their disaffection, and desired to strengthen his frontier against attacks by reconciling these dissenters to the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 35.



After much consultation with Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, he issued, in the year 639, what he termed an *Ecthesis*, or exposition of the Christian faith, which had a contrary effect to his intention, by opening a new and general controversy. The *Ecthesis* was obnoxious to some as a compromise with Monophysite heretics, to others as an aggressive act of interference by the emperor in questions of doctrine. The Patriarch Sergius had obtained the indiscreet assent of Pope Honorius to the terms of this document ; but several profound and earnest theologians saw in it a tendency to subvert the doctrine of the complete humanity of Christ.

The union of two Natures in the Person of Christ is a principle which underlies the decisions of the first four General Councils. Arius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches were condemned as infringing on this principle, either by detracting from the perfect Divinity or the perfect humanity of Christ. Throughout the mazes of argument and conflicting interpretations of Scripture, a deep religious sentiment guided the Church, a sense of necessity that a true mediator between God and man must be very God and very man. Christian faith and hope rested on the revelation of Christ as God incarnate. The greatest theologians, from Athanasius downwards, were jealous of any speculation or suggestion which appeared to disconnect man from God, by denying to Christ the most entire fellowship in the Divine nature, and the fullest sympathy with human nature. It was this pro-

found sentiment which, in the partisan disputes between Nestorius and his adversaries, led the Church to rebuke alternately the extravagance of both. And the same spirit was aroused against the well-meant but ill-conceived plan of conciliation, which was put forth in the *Ecthesis* of Heraclius.

He hoped to satisfy the Catholics and Monophysites by a formula, which described the will of Christ as a "Divine-human energy"—a phrase which was understood to concede to the Monophysites that there was a fusion of the Divine and human natures in Christ, so far as His will was concerned. By means of this concession the Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria had already brought thousands of Monophysites back to the Catholic Church, before the emperor had published his *Ecthesis*. But Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, sounded an alarm of heresy which was taken up rapidly in all the Churches, both East and West. The supporters of the emperor's plan were denominated *Monothelites*, as affirming the doctrine of one will.

While this question was agitating the whole Church, the religion of Mohammed advanced by portentous strides. The Saracens, as the people of Arabia were called by their neighbours, appeared in force on the borders of Syria. Their horsemen, mistaken at first for mere marauding parties, grew to the numbers of an army. Mohammed himself lived just long enough to hear of the first victory of his followers over the Romans. He died in A.D. 632, and his death appeared to kindle renewed zeal

among the Moslems. During the nine remaining years of the reign of Heraclius, the provinces which he had rescued from the hands of Chosroes were lost to him again, and he seemed to have neither heart nor hope to fight in their defence. Two great defeats convinced him that he was overmatched by his new enemy ; and after the capture of Jerusalem and Antioch, he had not energy to attempt the defence of Alexandria. His attempt at consolidating the empire by Christian reunion had failed, and only added to the distress and disappointment of his dying hours.

In the disorders which followed the death of Heraclius, the Patriarch Pyrrhus, a Monothelite, fled from the capital to Carthage, where he met with the chief opponent of the Monothelites, a monk named Maximus, who also was a refugee. A public dispute was held between them in the year 645, in presence of the Exarch Gregory.<sup>1</sup> It was held in Greek, and Maximus had the unusual success of convincing his adversary, who acknowledged himself to have been in error : a surrender which may have been facilitated by the altered state of parties at court. Maximus and Pyrrhus returned to Constantinople. About the same time Fortunius, Bishop of Carthage, left his diocese, and was no more heard of. He was deposed as a Monothelite, and his place was filled by Victor, of whom little is recorded, except that he died in A.D. 650.

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<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, iii. p. 376.

At Rome, as at Carthage, a reaction against the Monothelite doctrine followed soon after the death of Heraclius. Pope Honorius, who had concurred with the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria, was dead, and his successor, Martin, was an active opponent of Monothelism. A Council was held in the Church of St. John Lateran, at which twenty Canons were passed in condemnation of all who approved of the Ecthesis of Heraclius, and of a similar document, called the Type, which was issued in A.D. 648 by his grandson Constans.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor Constans revenged himself on Martin, in a manner which was not infrequent at the Byzantine court, by causing him to be accused of a treasonable conspiracy. By this means the civil power avoided the appearance of open aggression on the liberty of the Church. Martin was conveyed as a prisoner to Constantinople, treated with shameful insult, and would probably have been put to death, had not the Patriarch Paul, himself upon his death-bed, made earnest intercession for his life. Sentence of banishment was pronounced, and the pope, worn out with infirmity and privations, ended his days in the Crimea six months afterwards.

For Maximus, whose earnest zeal and ability as a theologian marked him out as the leader of the resistance to Monothelism, a more cruel fate was reserved. His high character made the emperor

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<sup>1</sup> Neander, v. 257.

desirous by all means to win him over. At one time he was threatened, at another flattered ; and a new formulary of union was set before him, which he might have signed with a safe conscience, if he had been content to hide his belief under ambiguous language. Finding him inflexible, Constans banished him to a castle in Thrace, and renewed there his endeavours to compel him to submission. At last he recalled the old man to Constantinople, where he was publicly scourged, his tongue cut out, and his right hand cut off. Maximus did not long survive this mutilation.

The Monothelite controversy was terminated by the sixth General Council, in A.D. 680. This was the first of those called Trullan, from being held in a vaulted chamber, a hall of the imperial palace of Constantinople. Constantine III., who was then emperor, was present at the Council, and showed himself chiefly anxious to reconcile the Eastern and Western Churches. After many animated discussions, the Western opinions prevailed, and Monothelism was condemned. Among those who were anathematized by name was the deceased Pope Honorius.

In modern times this incident, the condemnation of a Pope by a General Council, has attracted more notice than the theological question which was decided. Monothelism was essentially a compromise, intended to effect a practical object, the reconciliation of the sects in the East which were alienated from the empire ; but this compromise

took a form of dogma so subtle in its analysis of the Divine nature, that only the authority and influence of the Byzantine court could have given to it a world-wide interest ; and the question has passed away with the occasion. It is hardly possible to explain clearly the views of the Monothelites and their adversaries, without overstating the points of difference between them. The whole dispute may be illustrated by distinguishing between the terms unity and union. Both sides agreed that the Divine and human wills in Christ acted harmoniously as one will, and differed only on the point whether this effective union were a real unity.

From the character of this controversy it is obvious how wide must have been the interval between the sphere of thought in which theologians moved, and that of Christendom at large. To the uneducated multitude the Canons of the Trullan Council were unintelligible, especially to those who were unfamiliar with the Greek language. The popular religion was more and more closely associated with a superstitious adoration of images. The spiritual life of the Church was to a great extent decomposed into its several elements. Devout reverence, profound intelligence, austere morality, were all to be found in the Church ; but, with some notable exceptions, they were to be found separately, not in combination, at least in the Greek Empire. The people were devout, but with ignorant and superstitious devotion ; the

theologians were acute, but with a habit of mind which was wanting in spiritual reverence; the monks were ascetic, but summed up the virtues of life in asceticism. Christianity, which had been a bond of union among men of all races, was now so little conducive to fellowship, that Christian dissenters took part with the Magians and the Moslems against the orthodox Church.

Looking only to the state of the Church in Asia and Africa, it might appear that Christianity was dying out, and that the Moslem arms were only hastening a dissolution which was certain. War, pestilence, and famine had thinned the population to an enormous extent. The despotism of Constantinople, ignorant of the arts of vigorous government, exhausted the resources of the provinces, and left them to languish. The ruling class, who used the Greek tongue, were, in Africa and elsewhere, pressed hard by a native population in the cities, and by barbarous tribes from inland districts who had never borne the yoke of Rome.

Yet while the sun of Christianity was setting in the East behind cloud and storm, it was rising in the West on lands which were scarcely known at Constantinople, except by fabulous report. While the Saracens were taking possession of the Holy Land, Edwin of Northumbria was receiving Baptism from Paulinus. Forty years later, Pope Vitalian sent Theodore of Tarsus, as archbishop, to organize the missions in the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy in one comprehensive diocesan system.



Theodore was accompanied by an African monk, Hadrian, who declined the primacy.<sup>1</sup> The conversion of the English people corresponds very nearly, in point of time, with the establishment of the empire of the caliphs.

In Britain, in Gaul, in Spain, in Italy, a new order was arising out of the chaos which followed the dissolution of the ancient Roman Empire. On the other hand, though the name of Rome was still attached to the monarchy of Constantine's successors, their dominion was collapsing on all sides. Barbarians laid waste the plains of Thrace almost within sight of Constantinople, and the Saracens threatened the city itself. What remained in Europe to the prince who bore the titles of Emperor, Cæsar, Augustus, with every addition which could lend grandeur to his style, was part of Italy, soon to be lost, and part of Greece. He was master also of a few islands and strips of land on the Asiatic coast, within reach of the Byzantine navy, which had not yet ceased to be a formidable power. North Africa, the most distant, was probably also the most valuable of his possessions, when the Saracens, having conquered Egypt, crossed the sandy deserts which separated Egypt from Tripolis.

An examination of the state of Eastern Christendom, immediately before the Moslem conquest, tends greatly to diminish the first sense of regret that the imperial power was broken. On a super-

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<sup>1</sup> Bright, *Early English Church*, p. 218.

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ficial view we see enthroned at Constantinople a monarch who is the representative of orthodox faith, of civilization, of law. But the hollowness of this fair semblance is transparent on closer inspection. In the orthodox faith of the Eastern Church there was little more than words. In the artificial civilization of the people there was no true nobility of character. Even law, the least unreal support of the State, was a system of machinery to hold together, in a lifelike form, a body politic from which the vigour of life had departed.





## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE MOSLEM CONQUEST.

MOHAMMEDANISM was in its second generation when the Saracen armies penetrated westward as far as the African provinces. Mohammed himself had been dead fifteen years ; his comrades, Abubeker and Omar, the two first caliphs, had also passed away, and the dominion of Islam had expanded so as to fill a territory not inferior to that which acknowledged the sovereignty of the successors of Constantine. In the year 647, in which the government of North Africa was first threatened with a Moslem invasion, the most important and venerable cities of the East had already fallen into Moslem hands. The victories of Kaled, the "Sword of God," had subjugated all Asia as far as the Euphrates ; and Amrou was seated on the throne of the Pharaohs in Egypt. Meanwhile Damascus, Tyre, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, had been taken ; and the rapid progress of Moslem conquest had obliterated, like a sponge, the numerous Churches of Asia Minor.

There is not, in the history of the world, a more interesting problem than the sudden and lasting occupation of this most illustrious portion of the globe by the followers of Mohammed. To a limited extent, the Saracen victories may be ascribed to causes of which we have previous example in the invasion of the Western Empire by the Goths and other kindred tribes. From the South and East, as well as from the North, birds of prey were attracted, before life was extinct, to the carcase of the imperial eagle. But the resemblance of the Gothic to the Moslem invasion is slight, in comparison of the contrast between the two. A religious element, which is altogether secondary in the former, is in the latter of supreme importance. The hosts of the North overwhelmed the Romans by physical strength and numbers; but the number of the Saracens was quite insufficient to explain their success. The most conspicuous military feature of these victories was the persistent valour of the Arab cavalry. Fearless of death and apparently insensible to fatigue, they renewed their terrible onset hour after hour, and sometimes day after day, until their exhausted adversaries yielded, and sought safety in flight which was almost certain destruction. Those who made good their retreat once, seldom cared to try the issue of battle again. Roman and Persian alike felt the dread of antagonists who took no respite from warfare. Armies of brave men who had won reputation under Heraclius, or under his rival Chosroes, gave way to panic fear,

after having tried their strength against the Saracens. This invincible power cannot be explained by military causes alone. What gave the Saracens their chief advantage was not superiority in generalship or discipline, numbers or weapons, but the ardour of an extraordinary religious fanaticism.

In wars which are waged by the ambition of kings, it is a commonplace maxim to ascribe victory to the side which can bring the largest force into the field, which is a question of generalship at any particular moment, but more a question of finances when the conflict is prolonged. Yet the valour of individual men, of which this estimate takes no account, is often an essential element of strength ; and when this valour is drawn from a spring of enthusiasm, which acts on large bodies of men at once, suppressing mutual jealousy and the love of ease, it has often won victory against enormous odds. Such a spring of enthusiasm the Moslem armies found in the doctrines of the Koran.

It is to the Koran that the conquerors attributed their own success, and there seems to be every reason to conclude that they were so far right. Regarded as a human work, the Koran is a wonderful book. In the first place, it is an imitation, not altogether unskilful, of the most sublime parts of the Old Testament. The precepts, and to some extent the style, of the Pentateuch and the Book of Job, are paraphrased in Mohammed's eloquent rhapsodies. In the next place, the Koran is peculiarly adapted for the popular ear. While,

from a higher point of view, it is open to the slighting criticism that what is good in it is not new, and what is new is not good, it invests certain great elementary truths with a semblance of novelty, and brings them home to the conscience of a half-savage people by excluding all that is abstruse and mysterious. Affirming the unity of God, and denying the incarnation of Christ, Mohammed expounded his religion in a form which presented no theological difficulties to his hearers. His precepts of self-denial in the present life satisfied those earnest and ascetic minds, without which no religious movement can prosper; while his promises of reward in Paradise were expressed in sensuous language which fired the imagination of the most vulgar of his followers. To the doctrine of the New Testament he stood in a hostile attitude, rejecting the names Father and Son as utterly inapplicable to God. Yet among the ignorant multitude who formed the majority of Eastern Christendom, the Koran was not unacceptable, as it recognized the unity of God, the Divine mission of Moses and of Jesus, the Divine election of the faithful, and the future doom of heaven and hell. Moreover, the Arabic of the Koran was a more extensively popular language than the Greek of the New Testament; and the majestic power of its style was such, that Mohammed could venture to appeal to its diction, as a self-evident proof of the Divine inspiration under which it was written.

Thus it was not only by their swords, but by

their book, that the Moslems won victories. The Koran put in an articulate form what was latent, half smothered in the hearts of the people of Syria and Egypt, who had as little sympathy with the theological disputes of the Greeks, their rulers, as Welsh peasants and Cornish miners in the last century had with such treatises as Berkeley's *Alciphron* or Warburton's *Divine Legation*. Multitudes embraced Islam, as a religion which was easy for the ignorant to understand; and the sectaries of the East looked upon the doctrine of Mohammed with less aversion than the doctrine of their oppressors at Constantinople. While the Primate of North Africa was deposed because of his error in denying the duality of the will of Christ, the Copts of Egypt were bidding welcome to the armies of the Arabian prophet, and one of the leading citizens of Memphis declared voluntarily to Amrou, "I abjure for ever the Byzantine tyrant, his synod of Chalcedon, and his Melchite slaves."

To conquered nations, the Moslems offered the choice of the Koran, the sword, or the tribute: the latter being assessed at two gold pieces a head for grown men. Old men, women, and children were exempted. Lay brotherhoods of monks were also exempted; but the clergy, who wore the tonsure, were to be treated with rigour, according to Abubeker's instructions. "Remember," he told his general, in words which illustrate the ideal of Moslem warfare—"remember that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in



the assurance of judgment, and the hope of Paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression ; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs ; but let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm trees, nor kill any cattle except for food. When you make any covenant, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you advance, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose to themselves to serve God that way ; let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries. And you will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who have shaven crowns ; be sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter till they either turn Moslems or pay tribute.”<sup>1</sup>

There happens to be extant a treatise on the duties of a Christian soldier, addressed to a governor of North Africa by the deacon Ferrandus, in the latter part of Justinian’s reign. Ferrandus bases his instruction on seven precepts :—(i.) Believe that the help of God’s grace is necessary in every action. (ii.) Let your life be a glass in which your soldiers may see what they ought to do. (iii.) Have no ambition but to be useful. (iv.) Love the commonwealth as thyself. (v.) Set things Divine above things human. (vi.) Be not rigorous in justice. (vii.) Remember that thou art a Christian.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. li.

<sup>2</sup> Neander, iv. 257.

In comparing the two ideals, Moslem and Christian, the most palpable difference is that the Christian teacher directs all his efforts to guide and control the angry passions which the Moslem chiefly desires to stimulate. Justice, mercy, and other moral virtues, which are of primary importance to a Christian, are secondary to a Moslem. Examples might probably be found in the age of the Crusades of injunctions given by Roman pontiffs, which might compare not altogether favourably with those of the Caliph Abubeker. But in those cases Christian teaching sinks below its true standard; while Moslem teaching is here at its highest level, from which it only differs for the worse.

The concentration of the Moslem idea of virtue in aggressive war tended to make the contest with Christendom unequal in this respect: that the Moslems threw all their energy into the contest, whereas the Christians had before them a higher object of life. Nevertheless, it has been proved subsequently that Christian faith, by the freer and larger development which it gives to all the faculties of man, can maintain a lasting ascendancy over Islam, even on the military field, which is that with which Christianity has least to do. Christian states, while maintaining a purer faith, a purer morality, and a progressive civilization, have been able, with the resources spared from other tasks, to turn back the tide of conquest, and, in India especially, to hold a great Moslem population in

subjection. When the moral forces inherent in Christianity are not cramped injuriously, they exert an influence which is felt as that of a superior power. Such an influence was gained by the monks of the West over the Northern nations, without drawing a sword, and a similar influence has been exercised by many a solitary Englishman at Oriental courts in modern times.

North Africa is distinguished by the prolonged and valiant resistance which was made to the Moslem invasion. Half a century elapsed before the conquest was complete. That it was effected at all may be attributed mainly to the mischievous effects of old religious disunion and recent despotism, which enfeebled the clergy and people. Another cause, which was not insignificant, was the degraded state of the monks, like those whom the Caliph Abubeker prudently spared, as being unlikely to hinder his plans of conquest. Monasticism is of all forms of society the most unequal in its results. The common offices of family life, which draw down the enthusiast from heavenly contemplation to earthly work, serve to lift up the sluggard from a torpor which is mistaken for spirituality. Monks are apt to be thus either far above or far below the average standard of their neighbours, as to spiritual character, leading an existence which may in extreme cases be described as almost angelic or almost vegetable. One monk like St. Gregory raises the whole age in which he lives. But in the Eastern monasteries too many able men buried

the talents which might have served their generation ; and in the same way, though not to the same extent, North-Africa was drained of a proportion of its best blood. The predestinarian doctrines, which Augustine had expounded to sympathetic hearers, had produced their natural effect of exhausting the zeal which they stimulated at first ; and even the splendour of his genius was apt to discourage others from following in his steps, except by repeating what he had said. Neither the clergy nor the monks of North Africa took a prominent place in the final contest, in which the very existence of the Church was involved.

Abdallah, the Caliph Othman's foster brother, who had been secretary to Mohammed, and was reputed to be the best horseman in Arabia, led an army of forty thousand Moslems along the North African coast, and laid siege to the chief city of Tripolis in A.D. 647. The Exarch Gregory brought an army to oppose him, and a battle of many days took place. Gregory was accompanied by his daughter, whose hand he offered, with a large dowry, to any one who should bring him Abdallah's head. The same offer was made on the part of Abdallah for the head of Gregory, at the suggestion of one of his bravest officers, Zobeir. The next day the Saracens kept a part of their forces in reserve, while they continued to make a show of battle with the remainder, till both sides paused to rest in the midday heat. Then a sudden charge of the Saracen reserve threw the African army

into confusion. Zobeir himself killed the Exarch with his own hand, and disdainfully refused to take the brave and beautiful maiden as the prize of his valour, saying that his sword was consecrated to the service of religion.<sup>1</sup> The Moslems advanced as far as Sufetula, a city within 150 miles of Carthage, imposing a tribute upon those whom they spared. They then returned to Egypt, and for twenty years the divisions among the successors of Mohammed, after the death of Othman, suspended their foreign wars.

The second Moslem invasion of Africa in A.D. 665 was in response to an appeal in which the sectaries and Catholics of the province joined for once together. They suffered so much from the Byzantine ministers, that they preferred to trust to the protection of the Moslems. Akbah, at the head of ten thousand Arabs, traversed the whole of Numidia and Mauretania to the Atlantic coast. There, with that romantic chivalry which mingled with the religious fanaticism of the Saracens, he rode into the ocean and cried aloud, "Great God! if my course were not stopped by the sea, I would still go on to the unknown kingdoms of the West, preaching the unity of Thy holy name, and putting to the sword the rebellious nations, who worship any gods but Thee." To secure his conquests, he built a fortified city, Cairoan, a few miles inland from Adrumetum. So far had the country become depopulated, that

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. li.

in clearing the site, the builders found the remains of a deserted Roman town there.

The Byzantine government made a final effort for the recovery of the African provinces, and for the preservation of Carthage, which was still untaken. A powerful expedition was fitted out, and both Akbah and his successor Zuheir were defeated in succession by the imperial army. Another respite followed; but in A.D. 698, Hassan, the governor of Egypt, took Carthage by storm, after a siege in which the defenders were aided by an allied force of Greeks, Sicilians, and Goths. Carthage was destroyed by fire; and the African provinces passed for ever out of the hands of the emperor.

The Saracen conquest was, however, still incomplete. Hassan was opposed in the interior by an army of Moors, led by a native prophetess and queen, Kahina, before whose onset he was forced to retreat. It is said that Kahina laid waste the cities of the coast from Tripolis to Tangiers, believing that the treasures contained in them attracted the invaders. Whether or no the destruction of these cities is rightly ascribed to one particular period, the story has doubtless a basis of fact. The Christian inhabitants turned once more to the Saracens as protectors, who succeeded, not without difficulty, in subjugating the Moors and establishing a permanent sovereignty in North Africa. In A.D. 710, the Saracen governor Musa was strong enough in his province to embark upon a new career of conquest in Spain, at the head of a united army of Arabs

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and Moors, who are described henceforward by either name.

As the Byzantine fleet was then and for long afterwards too strong for the Saracens to encounter, they chose situations at some distance from the coast for their strongholds, and left the ancient cities, which had been built by the Phoenicians and Greeks, to fall into ruin. Of the inhabitants, it is probable that many, particularly those who were rich enough to have friends, were conveyed by sea to Europe. The greater number, however, must have been left to the oppression of the Arabs. The want of particular records of this time indicates a decline of literary activity. But such a decline is not incompatible with a social refinement, to which the barbarism of the Moslems must have been almost as hard to bear as their cruelty.

Nature itself contributed to make the ruin of Africa more complete. The outline of the coast changed, the river Bagradas altering its course, and the sea advancing in one part and receding in another. Thus what was once the harbour of Utica is now far inland, and the localities of Carthage, which were clearly defined by ancient historians, became so difficult to recognize, that until recently the whole topography of the city was open to dispute.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, "The Ruins of Carthage."





## CHAPTER XX.

### DECAY OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH.

THE saddest events which are recorded in history are probably less full of sadness than some of which the history is unrecorded. What became of the Christians of Africa in the Moslem conquest is known more by inference than by certain information. Silence has all the effect of eloquence, when one inquires concerning a Church which was accustomed to break the peace of the Roman pontiffs by its clamorous energy, and to rival the Œcumenical Councils of Constantinople by the number of its bishops assembled in synod. It can hardly be doubted that many of the sufferings of the Vandal conquest, which are vividly described by survivors, were repeated by the Saracens, with the difference that none survived. No Victor of Vite has narrated in detail the cruelties which were undergone by those martyrs for the faith, who resisted to the death the religion of Mohammed. We only know how resolute was the endurance of the African Christians, how merciless was the fury

of the Saracens; and the consideration which tends most to mitigate the idea we have to form of the Moslem persecution, is that their eager fanaticism was apt to make short work with those who would not yield.

Of the other two alternatives which the Saracens offered to the nations whom they conquered, the Koran or the tribute, comparatively few made choice of the tribute. In A.D. 754, little more than half a century after the capture of Carthage, the Pasha Abdurrahman wrote to Caliph Abdul Abbas that the tribute of the infidels had ceased, through their conversion. His statement was not literally true; but it was not far from the truth. The handful of Christians who lingered on were almost too insignificant in numbers to be regarded by the governor of a province.

Carthage was not rebuilt. The seat of the Moslem government, which was at first at Cairoan, was eventually fixed at Tunis, separated from Carthage by an inlet of the sea about ten miles long. As to the fate of the people of Carthage and of the rest of North Africa, one fact is most significant: the depopulation of the whole country. It is estimated that the single province of proconsular Africa contained, in its highest prosperity, a population of eighteen millions; there are now only a million and a half in the corresponding territory of the Bey of Tunis.<sup>1</sup> Such a disappearance of inhabi-

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<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 67.

tants in one of the choicest regions of the earth, a land doubly favoured in all that could yield agricultural or commercial prosperity, is suggestive of a frightful chapter of untold sorrows. No single cause is adequate to explain so great a reversal of the ordinary course of nature. It can hardly be imagined that any considerable part of the people could have perished by the sword of the Saracens, whose ferocity was less dreaded than that of the Moors. Nor could slavery, however pitiless and wasteful in its consumption of human life, make away with so vast a number. Pestilence and famine are far more rapid causes of depopulation; and it is likely that the plague of Justinian's reign accelerated a decline which had begun under the dominion of the Vandals.

After the destruction of Carthage, Utica, and other cities on the coast, the foreign trade of Africa ceased altogether. The people were thrown upon their local resources, which were indeed ample enough and to spare, if well employed. But insecurity of life and property made men indifferent to both. Husbandmen grew weary of sowing their fields, to be reaped by others. The vital energies of the people, like the rivers, dried up, and flowed with diminished volume in a narrower channel. At intervals there would be a season of famine. If the harvest failed for want of sufficient rain, the distress of the whole population would be extreme, and many would starve. At such times the lives of tens of thousands would depend on the stores

which had been providently reserved, and on the food which could be imported to the maritime towns. But the Arabs and Moors had no idea of forethought, nor was there at hand the commercial enterprise which was necessary to draw means of subsistence from abroad. So the misery of famine fell upon the country with unmitigated force, when the Greek and Phœnician colonies were swept away.

Africa has always been very subject to the ravages of insect life, contending with man for the fruits of the earth. Clouds of locusts, darkening the sky like a hail-storm, settle down upon extensive tracts of land, and, after destroying every trace of vegetation, poison the air with their dead bodies.

The natives of Africa are said in modern times to be healthy in general, but to succumb quickly to disease, so that their first sickness is apt to be their last. Any visitation of the plague makes fearful havoc among them. A few years ago, in 1867, 200,000 are said to have died of the plague in the French province of Algeria, a territory which corresponds to the ancient Numidia and part of Mauretania.<sup>1</sup> It has also been observed that the belief in predestination, which was a prominent feature in African Christianity, before it was reasserted with fresh emphasis by the Moslems, has an unusually strong hold of the minds of the people to this day, and makes them indisposed to take any measures for the preservation of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Séguin, *Walks in Algiers*.

An almost total darkness covers the decay of the African Church, penetrated only by rare notices occurring incidentally at intervals of several centuries. In the year 837, the Jacobite Patriarch of Alexandria, himself a tributary of the Moslems, sent five bishops to Cairoan as a kind of mission to the remaining Christians of North Africa, who were no longer in communication with the Catholics of Rome or of Constantinople. More than two hundred years later, the far-reaching power of the Roman pontiffs of the eleventh century raised hopes in the afflicted Christians of Africa.<sup>1</sup> A bishop named Thomas appealed to Pope Leo IX. for assistance. He complained that he had been scourged by the Saracens, and also that his own suffragans, four in number, refused obedience to him. This letter, written in 1053 or 1054, was followed, after an interval of twenty years, by further correspondence between Africa and Rome. Gregory VII., in the midst of his contention with the German emperor, Henry IV., found time to embrace Africa in his world-wide interests, and wrote a letter to the Moorish sultan, in which he interceded for the Christians. His epistle gives the name of another bishop, Cyriacus, and discloses the fact that three bishops could no longer be found to take part in an episcopal consecration. Some time elapsed after this before the smouldering fire of African Christianity died out altogether. Both

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, ch. li. note 209; *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 70.

in Africa and in Spain, under the Arab government, there continued to be a Christian community called Mozarabic, or adoptive Arabic, who cherished Christian doctrine while outwardly submitting to circumcision, and to abstinence from pork and wine, in compliance with the Koran. For the use of these Christians in Africa, the Canons of the Church of Spain were translated from Latin into Arabic, in the eleventh century; and a few survivors of the ancient Church lingered on at Tunis and Algiers, occasionally finding sympathy in their Spanish brethren.

North Africa becomes known as Barbary, a word which seems to have been originally intended to imitate the sound of an unknown language. The name barbarous was applied by the Greeks to all nations but their own; adopted by the Romans in a similar sense; and at length found a local home among the Berbers of Africa, after the barbarians of the North were brought within the range of civilized fellowship.<sup>1</sup>

In the age of the Crusades a transient light is shed upon the ruins of Carthage by the expedition of Louis IX. of France against Tunis. The king had exchanged embassies with the Sultan of Tunis, and had listened with credulous enthusiasm to the sultan's message that he desired to receive Baptism, if he could do so without suffering from the consequences of the resentment of his subjects. That

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<sup>1</sup> See Gibbon, ch. li. note 102.

such a message was given in good faith is hardly credible ; for the faith of Islam benumbs that higher spiritual intelligence to which the Christian revelation appeals ; and sincere conversions are extremely rare. It is more probable that St. Louis mistook some phrases of ceremonious courtesy, uttered in reply to his own devout aspirations, than that the Moorish prince wilfully deluded him into an enterprise which could bring him little advantage, whatever harm it might bring on his adversary.

At all events, Louis set sail for Tunis in the summer of 1270, full of hope that he might be present as sponsor at the sultan's baptism, as Charlemagne had been sponsor at the baptism of his Saxon enemy, Witikind. The French army, when they set sail from Aigues Mortes, did not know whither their king was leading them. It was not till they had halted for four days' rest in Sardinia, that Louis summoned his chief nobles on board his ship, the *Montjoie*, and told them that Tunis was the destination of their crusade.

The fleet arrived before Tunis on the 17th of July. The French admiral, forgetting that he was come in the character of a friend, at once seized the harbour and all the ships which it contained. Immediately afterwards the French landed on the ground which had once been Carthage, but where now the very ruins were rounded into hillocks by drifting sand. On this ground, the sepulchre of thousands who had been slaughtered in the fall of the city, a pestilence soon broke out under the



midsummer sun, and Louis himself was one of the first to be struck down with fever. On the 3rd of August he was unable to leave his tent. He inquired after his favourite son, the Count of Nevers, who had been taken ill a few days before, and had been removed on board ship for the sea air, for the French camp was poisoned with unburied corpses, thrown promiscuously into the trench. The young prince, Louis heard, was dead. He felt that his own death was near, and calling for his heir, Prince Philip, drew from his Prayer-book a paper of instructions which he had written out for him, and bade him observe them scrupulously. He gave papers also to his daughter Isabel, and her husband, the King of Navarre, charging Isabel to deliver another to her youngest sister, Agnes, who was betrothed to the Duke of Burgundy. "Think, my dearest daughter," he said, "many people have fallen asleep in foolish thoughts of sin, and have not been alive next morning."

He lived three weeks after the fever seized him. On the 24th of August he received the envoys of Michael Palæologus, the Greek emperor, who feared an attack from the brother of Louis, Charles of Anjou, then reigning in Sicily; for the naval supremacy of the Greeks had passed to the Italian cities. The Greek ambassadors entreated the King of France to use his authority to restrain his brother. Louis faintly promised to comply with their master's request, if he could, and exhorted

them to patience and courage. After this, he was occupied wholly in prayer and meditation. He was heard to murmur, in a low voice, "Lord, have mercy on this people of mine! Bring them back to their country; may they not fall into the hand of their enemies, nor be compelled to deny Thy Name!" More than once he raised himself in his bed, and cried aloud, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! We will go to Jerusalem!" His last act was to receive Extreme Unction, lying on sackcloth and ashes, with the cross elevated before his eyes. On the following day, Monday, 25th of August, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he passed away quietly, with the words: "Father, after the example of my Divine Master, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."<sup>1</sup>

A chapel was erected by the French Government in 1841, to mark the supposed spot on which St. Louis expired. It occupies the most commanding situation in Carthage, close to the cisterns which are mentioned in the French chronicle of the expedition, as the landing-place of the crusaders. There is also in the neighbourhood, on the headland called Cape Carthage, a Moslem village, which is associated with St. Louis by local tradition, and is called Sidi bu Said, "the village of the Saint."<sup>2</sup> On this spot probably, rather than in the midst of the ruins, the death of St. Louis actually took place.

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<sup>1</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de France*, vol. ii.; *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Bosworth Smith, *Carthage*, p. 466.

It is not inconsistent with Moslem feeling, that the memory of one whom they saw to be so deeply revered should be held in honour, though he was their enemy. Sanctity, according to Moslem ideas, is unconnected with doctrine, and associated rather with self-devotion.

At the very time when St. Louis was vainly striving to win back Africa to the Christian faith by force of arms, a Franciscan friar was meditating the accomplishment of the same end by persuasion. Raymond Lully was an unsuccessful missionary, and his lifelong ambition ended in a barren martyrdom. Nevertheless, the history of Christian missions has among its many heroes few who can be compared with him for the integrity of his self-devotion, and for the high conception which he formed of his enterprise.

He was a native of Majorca, and was attached to the court of the King of Aragon, holding the office of seneschal, when a vision of Christ on the cross, which haunted him in spite of himself, as he sat down to write amatory songs, constrained him to reflect on the life he was leading. From bitter self-reproach he passed, after a time, into a happy sense of having found peace with God through the mercy of Christ. His own conversion was followed by a fixed resolve to dedicate his life to the conversion of the Saracens. It was not by the sword, but by revelation of the truth, that he hoped to win converts. "I see many knights," he said, "who cross the sea on their way to the Holy Land,

but come back without effecting their purpose. It seems to me, therefore, that the Holy Land can be won in no other way than that whereby Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, and Thy holy Apostles, won it : by love, and prayer, and the shedding of tears and blood."

Filled with these thoughts, he projected the plan of a missionary college, in which students should be taught the Arabic language, that they might be able to refute the errors of the Mohammedans. He hoped to persuade the pope that such an undertaking was more worthy of encouragement and support than the costly failures of the Crusades. In the autumn of 1266, on St. Francis's Day, he heard a sermon on the life of St. Francis which determined him to put on the grey gown of a mendicant friar.

Intent on his design, in which he had for an example the expedition of St. Francis to Egypt, to convert the sultan, he prepared himself with a methodical forethought to which Francis did not condescend. Raymond purchased an Arab slave, on purpose to study his language. For nine years he persevered in this task, being not less anxious to learn the speech than the doctrine of those whom he wished to convert. Having at last qualified himself as a missionary, and written and lectured much on the subject, he applied to the pope for assistance, but he met with little sympathy ; and after several more years spent in fruitless attempts to carry out his original plan, he resolved, in 1291,

to go alone to Tunis. He had already taken his passage on a vessel about to sail from Genoa, and had placed his books on board, when, after taking leave of his friends, a horror seized him of the dangers which were before him. He hesitated; the ship sailed without him, leaving him in an agony of remorse which threw him into a fever. He had scarcely recovered when he embarked on another ship, and arrived at Tunis full of hope and confidence. His first act was to challenge the Moslem doctors to a public disputation, declaring that he was ready to abide by the issue, and to surrender his faith if he were vanquished. The challenge was willingly accepted, and a large concourse listened to the arguments.

Raymond based his reasoning on the principle that the true religion must be that which showed the noblest idea of God. "Every wise man," he said, "must acknowledge that to be the true religion, which ascribed the greatest perfection to the Supreme Being, both as to His goodness, wisdom, power, and glory; and also as to the harmony existing between them. Now, their religion," he continued, "was defective in acknowledging only two active principles in the Deity—His will and His wisdom; while it left His goodness unexercised. But the Christian faith could not be charged with this defect."<sup>1</sup> He proceeded to expound the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, urging especially the

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<sup>1</sup> Maclear, *Apostles of Mediæval Europe*, p. 282.

grandeur of the Christian conception of the Deity, and the harmony between God's goodness and greatness as exhibited in God the Son.

The Imaums of Tunis were less moved by the profound arguments of Raymond than by the earnestness of his character. They thought it would be dangerous to allow him to continue to teach Christian doctrines. One proposed that he should be put to death ; another suggested that if one of their own religion were to show such self-devotion by preaching to the Christians at the peril of his life, he would be thought worthy of honour. The king, who had put him in prison, and was about to order his execution, was persuaded to banish him. Raymond was taken to the vessel which brought him, and warned that he would be stoned if he set foot in the country again. He eluded the observation of the king's officers, and remained in hiding for three months ; but, seeing no way of winning disciples, he took another ship and sailed to Naples.

At a different period the lofty intellect and zeal of Raymond might have raised him to the highest eminence, and enabled him to exercise an influence comparable to that of Bernard of Clairvaux. But he fell on times which were not favourable to the due appreciation of a mind like his. His truth-loving aspirations were over the heads alike of Christian and Moslem. He tried in vain to induce Pope Boniface VIII. to turn his thoughts for a little while from the assertion of his papal pre-

rogative in secular affairs, to the consideration of Christian missions. He travelled to and fro, at one time disputing with Mohammedans and Jews, in his native island, Majorca, at another striving to convert the sectaries of Armenia to the Catholic faith.

In 1307, when he was past seventy, he made a second attempt to plant Christianity in Africa. He landed at Bugia, between Tunis and Algiers, and there proclaimed in Arabic that he was ready to prove that the religion of Mohammed was false, and that Christianity was the only true religion. His rare intellectual endowments, together with the sincerity of his character, won the hearts of some of the Moslem scholars, not usually prone to mercy. They expostulated with him on his rashness, then argued with him till they lost patience, and at last offered him wealth and honour if he would renounce his creed. His only answer was to promise them wealth and honour, with everlasting life, if they would believe in Christ. Again his life was spared, and he was sent out of the country in a ship that was driven ashore near Leghorn.

Still Raymond would not despair. He proposed to the Council of Vienna that missionary colleges should be established in various places, and that a new order of religious knighthood should be established. His representations were so far effectual that Oriental professorships were founded at Paris, Salamanca, and Oxford, and at some



other cities. But old age could not quench his ardour. For the third time he crossed over to Africa in 1314, and ministered privately to a little congregation at Bugia, who had been his disciples on his former visit. His favourite subject was the love of God revealed in Christ. He urged with unwearied persistence that whatever Moslems and Jews might teach of the love of God, fell far short of the revelation of Christ's atonement. After a year spent thus in secret, he made himself known, and suffered the martyrdom which he sought, being stoned to death on June 30, 1315, in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

If any descendants of the members of the native Church of Africa still kept the Christian faith, they were so few in number as to be lost, after the thirteenth century, in the multitude of Christian captives brought from Europe. The depopulation of Africa had reached a point at which more labourers were wanted; and so grew up a piratical slave trade, which was not extinguished until the bombardment of Algiers, within the memory of men still living. From the nature of the case, the piracy of Algiers and Tunis has no connected history; but it was, perhaps, the worst of all the evils of the ages during which it lasted.

Several treaties were made with the Moorish sultans by powerful kings, the Emperor Frederick II., Philip III. of France, and others, stipulating for merciful treatment of Christian captives, and the free exercise of their religion. On the terms of

these treaties it would be idle to dwell with confidence. Their value depended on the chance of their being enforced, which in general was extremely small. Meanwhile, the Christians who fell into the hands of African corsairs were liable to serve in the lowest drudgery, however high their birth or delicate their breeding ; often insufficiently fed, sometimes not fed at all, but ordered to get their own food by thieving.

When the Spaniards, united under one powerful monarchy, delivered Spain from the Moors, they began to entertain designs of following up their conquests by an invasion of the African coast. A great armament was fitted out under Charles V. in 1535, to quell the red-bearded Greek pirate, Kheireddin, who held a commission as admiral under the Turkish sultan, Solyman, called "the Magnificent." Kheireddin, otherwise known as Barbarossa, had seized Algiers and Tunis, and his predatory expeditions were long the terror of the Mediterranean. Charles had a fleet of four hundred sail, under the command of the Genoese Andrea Doria. Among the best of his vessels were those of the Maltese Knights of St. John. They landed on the peninsula of Goletta, which separates the lake of Tunis from the sea, close by the ancient port of Carthage, and stormed the castle which Kheireddin had fortified to defend the narrow entrance to the lake. A simultaneous rising of the Christian slaves in Tunis gave them possession of the citadel. The Sultan of Tunis concluded a

peace on abject terms, promising never thenceforward to detain in captivity any of the emperor's subjects on any pretext whatever. But it was not many years before the pirates from the African coast made themselves as formidable as before. Even the great defeat of the Turkish navy by Don John of Austria at Lepanto, which established for a time the superiority of the Spaniards and their allies at sea, made little impression on the Moorish slave trade. Don John's own confessor was taken by a pirate, and sold as a slave at Algiers, where he spent the rest of his life with heroic self-sacrifice; for when he received from Don John a sum for his ransom, he gave part of it to buy a cemetery for the Christians, and part to release other captives whose need he thought to be greater than his own.

Among the tales of cruelty which were current among the Christian captives at Algiers, is one which recalls the ancient constancy of the African martyrs. Geronimo, an Arab foundling, who had received Baptism, was taken captive with his master, and bidden to recant. He refused, and twenty-four hours were given him to make his decision. On the following day he was brought to the Sultan of Algiers, as he superintended the building of a fort. Before them was a space filled with cement, and Geronimo was told that he should be built up there into the wall, in case of his refusal. He answered simply that he would not deny his faith. Thereupon he was at once laid on

his face in the cement, his hands tied behind him, and his feet tied together; his body was pressed down, and the builders proceeded with their work. The fort was demolished by the French in 1853, and on the spot which was indicated by tradition a skeleton was found embedded in the mortar, lying prostrate in the position described.

Several brotherhoods were formed in Europe for the charitable purpose of redeeming captives from slavery. The difficulties with which they had to contend were not limited to the raising of funds; for sometimes they were defrauded, losing both slave and ransom; and the capture of Christians became a more profitable trade by the large sums which were paid to redeem them. Renegades were employed to gain the confidence of the prisoners, in order to ascertain their rank and expectations, that their masters might fix their ransom at a high rate, if they had wealthy friends at home.

Vincent de Paul is, perhaps, the most celebrated of those who fell into the hands of the Barbary pirates. He has told in quaint language the narrative of his capture and imprisonment.

“I was on the point of leaving Marseilles by land, when I was persuaded by a gentleman, with whom I lodged, to sail with him as far as Narbonne, the weather being favourable; which I did to get there sooner, and to save expense; or I should rather say, not to get there at all, and to lose everything. The wind was so fair that we should have reached Narbonne the same day, if God had

not suffered three Turkish brigantines, which were coasting the Gulf of Lyons, to give us chase. They attacked us so fiercely that, two or three of our party being killed, and all the rest wounded, we were obliged to surrender to these worse than tigers. I myself received a wound from an arrow, which will serve me as a reminder for the rest of my life. In their first transports of fury, they hacked our pilot into a thousand pieces, enraged at having lost one of their chief men, besides four or five galley-slaves. This done, they put us in chains. . . . Having arrived at Barbary, they exposed us for sale, with a statement that we had been taken on a Spanish ship, because the French consul would have delivered us if they had not told this lie. Their manner of selling us was, after stripping us naked, and giving to each of us a pair of trousers, a linen jacket, and a cap, to walk us through the streets of Tunis. Having made us take five or six turns through the town, a chain round our necks, they led us back to the boat, that the buyers might see who could eat and who could not, to show that our wounds were not mortal. This done, they led us back to the square, where the buyers came to inspect us just as one does at the purchase of horses or cattle, opening our mouths to examine our teeth, feeling our sides, probing our wounds, and making us step, trot, and run, then carry loads, then wrestle to see the strength of each, and all sorts of brutalities."

Vincent's first master was a fisherman, who, he

says, "was obliged to get rid of me soon, for nothing disagreed with me so much as the sea." He was then bought by an old physician, who had been labouring for fifty years to find the philosopher's stone. His task was to keep ten or twelve furnaces burning for his master, who treated him kindly, talking much to him of alchemy, and more of his religion, promising to him riches and all his knowledge if he would be converted. After nearly a year spent thus, the old man died, and his nephew sold Vincent to a renegade native of Nice, who lived on an estate in the hills, where the country was very hot and wild. This man had three wives, one of whom was a Greek Christian. Another, who was a Turk, used to ask Vincent many questions as to Christians and their way of life, as he dug in the field, and bade him one day sing praises to his God. The recollection of the words, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" made him begin the Psalm "By the waters of Babylon," with tears in his eyes. In the evening she told her husband that he had done wrong to leave his religion; of which, Vincent, says, "she thought very highly from what I had told her of our God, and some praises which I had sung in her presence; in which she declared that she took so much pleasure, that she did not believe that paradise itself was so glorious or accompanied with so much joy as she felt while I praised my God." The consequence of her words, which Vincent compares to the prophetic warning of Balaam's ass,

was that next day her husband said to him, "I only wait for a convenient opportunity for us to escape to France; in a little while means will be found such that God will be praised." After six months longer of hope deferred, they left, in June, 1607, and the renegade was received publicly into the Church at Avignon.<sup>1</sup>

Vincent rarely spoke of his own captivity, but the recollection of what he had suffered made him ever afterwards full of sympathy for the Christian slaves in Barbary. His voice, to which none could listen without emotion, was effectively used in their behalf. He obtained the nomination of consular chaplains at Tunis, Algiers, and other places, for the special purpose of ministering to the captives. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon gave him a sum of forty thousand livres to lay out in these missions.

The increasing influence of the French in North Africa gave to the Christians a protection, which has been complete since the conquest of Algeria in the present century. In the city of Tunis there is now a population of twelve thousand Christians, of whom by far the greater part are Roman Catholics. It has been supposed, with some probability, that the despised Kabyles, who inhabit the interior of the province of Algeria, are a remnant of the ancient Christian population. Their refined features, and gentle expression of countenance, indicate a descent from a race more civilized than they are now.

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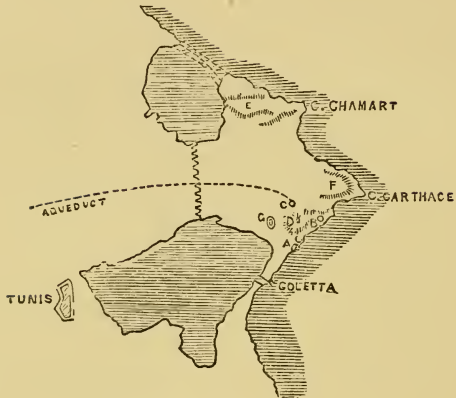
<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, pp. 103-105.



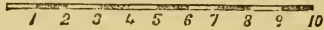
The site of Carthage remains deserted. Four French missionaries, attached to the memorial chapel of St. Louis on the ancient citadel, are, with their scholars, the only representatives of African Christianity on the ground where once stood the Basilica of Faustus, the scene of many a crowded assembly of bishops, and of the hospitable charity of Bishop Deogratias, when Rome lay at the feet of the ruler of Carthage. The ancient Church of North Africa has died out from the land, with all its characteristics of doctrine, ritual, and temperament, its independence, its mystical enthusiasm, its inflexible constancy in suffering. Like the seven-branched candlestick of the Temple of Jerusalem, which Genseric brought to Carthage, this manifold light of Christian truth has been removed out of its place, and has disappeared utterly.

But the continuity of the kingdom of Christ is independent of local and hereditary connection. Races die out, and places become deserted, yet the kingdom which is not of this world lives on. "The household of the true God has a consolation of its own, founded on things which cannot be shaken or pass away; nor does it regret the temporal life, in which it is trained for life eternal; using as a pilgrim this world's goods, and being tried and corrected by its evils."<sup>1</sup>

## PLAN OF CARTHAGE.



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|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| A. Harbour.                 | E. Catacomb Hill. |
| B. Smaller cisterns.        | F. Sidi bu Said.  |
| C. Larger cisterns (Malka). | G. Amphitheatre.  |
| D. Hill of St. Louis.       |                   |



Scale of English miles.



## APPENDIX.



### THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE.

A TRAVELLER who lands at Goletta, the port of Tunis, sees to the north a hilly tract of ground, forming the peninsula of Carthage, the nearest height of which is surmounted by the domed chapel of St. Louis, recently erected by the French. Goletta is situated on a sandy bar which separates the lake of Tunis from the open sea of the bay. This bar widens as it joins the angle of the peninsula on which Carthage was situated. At the point of junction, mounds of drifted sand and crumbled earth begin to appear, mantling the ruins of the city.

So completely has Carthage been effaced, that superficial travellers have asserted that nothing was left of it. No columns, like those of the Acropolis of Athens or the Roman Forum, remain standing. Even the situation of the harbour was disputed until a few years ago, and that of the citadel is disputed still. Some geographers, among whom was the distinguished Ritter, placed the harbour to the north of the Carthaginian peninsula, thereby altering the whole topography. The careful explorations of modern residents at Tunis, English and French, have determined the exact position of the harbour, which is the central point of the topography of Carthage; and considerable progress has been made towards the discovery of other sites, showing that the

chief part of the ancient city lay near the southern extremity of the peninsula.

Physical changes, which have taken place in the course of twenty centuries, are apt to mislead those who are guided by descriptions written at the time of the siege of Carthage by Scipio. What was formerly a bay, into which ships might sail from the Mediterranean and ride at anchor, has become an inland marsh, the haunt of flamingoes ; new sandy tracts of land have been formed towards the north-west ; while to the south-east the ground has subsided, so that the walls of ancient buildings are visible under water.<sup>1</sup>

An isthmus, which was formerly less than three miles in width, but is now much wider, connects the peninsula of Carthage with the mainland. The peninsula itself approximates to the form of a square, each side being about four miles long, and the angular points being nearly towards the north, east, and south. To the east, above the promontory of Cape Carthage, the ground rises to its greatest height, nearly four hundred feet above the sea. To the north, in the neighbourhood of Cape Ghamart, is a range of hills of which the highest, Gebel Kawi, or Catacomb Hill, is about three hundred feet above the level of the sea. Towards the south, the high ground which extends along the coast from Cape Carthage terminates in the Hill of St. Louis, which is rather less than two hundred feet above the sea, but occupies a prominent position to the eye of those who approach from Goletta.

At the foot of the Hill of St. Louis is the famous harbour or dock (A), excavated in the soil, according to Virgil's description. Its form, once seen, is too remarkable to be mistaken. An outer basin of oblong shape, about thirty acres in extent, is connected by a narrow passage with a circular basin of smaller size, in the midst of which is an island, once the head-quarters of the Carthaginian admiral.<sup>2</sup> This inner harbour, called the Cothon, or cup, was used for ships of

<sup>1</sup> Blakesley, *Algeria*.

<sup>2</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 435.

war, 220 of which were moored along the quays, when Carthage was the greatest naval power in the world. Ruined houses and drifting sand have partially filled up both harbours, but their outline is restored by recent excavations.

A little way from the harbour, following the line of coast, is another monument of the greatness of the city, the "smaller cisterns," as they are called (B, in the plan). Time has spared these works, which, being below the surface of the ground, have escaped the devastation which swept away temples and palaces. There was nothing to carry off, and nothing to burn; so they remain, "a huge mass of masonry imbedded in the soil, the low vaulted roofs rising side by side in pairs, only a few feet above the level of the hillside, where it has been excavated around them, and actually below its level where undisturbed."<sup>1</sup> They are little injured, and altogether cover an area about five hundred feet long by one hundred feet wide.<sup>2</sup> These reservoirs are eighteen in number, with circular basins at the four corners and half-way along the side. Their contents, when full, must have amounted to nearly a million cubic feet.

A similar but somewhat larger group of cisterns is situated at a distance of a mile from the sea, outside the walls of the ancient city. These cisterns (C) were visited by Dr. Shaw in 1740, and are described by him as twenty in number, and as measuring a hundred feet by thirty feet each, making a total area of six hundred feet by one hundred feet. They are not so compactly arranged, nor so well preserved, as the group of cisterns by the shore, and being now partly choked with earth, and partly inhabited by Arabs with their families and flocks, they cannot be thoroughly examined. These cisterns are situated at the termination of the Aqueduct, a magnificent work, which supplied Carthage with spring water from a mountain source at a distance of seventy miles.

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Sainte-Marie, *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 10.

Its height above the plain was from one hundred to one hundred and twenty feet. At the time when Dr. Shaw visited Carthage, some of the arches were standing in the plain between Carthage and Tunis ; but the Arabs, who use ancient masonry as a quarry for their own buildings, have carried it off, all but the bases which remain at intervals of ten feet, "like the vertebræ of some gigantic serpent." Portions of the Aqueduct are still entire, but they are not within sight of Carthage. To the south of Tunis there is a portion, half a mile long, which shows what the whole structure must have been in its integrity. This portion has been repaired lately, and now conveys water to Tunis. The position of the larger cisterns in relation to the Aqueduct has suggested two opposite theories : one, that the cisterns were of Roman workmanship ; the other, that the Aqueduct was Punic. It is not, however, at all unlikely that the Aqueduct, which has the appearance of a Roman work, should have been directed to the point at which Punic reservoirs existed already ; and the weight of antiquarian opinion seems to be in favour of this view. The Aqueduct may probably be ascribed to the age of Hadrian.<sup>1</sup>

The harbour and the two groups of cisterns (A, B, and C in the plan) are nearly equidistant from each other, and the triangular space between them may be assumed to comprise the central part of the city. Within this space, or immediately adjacent, are to be sought remains of the Byrsa, or Citadel, the Forum, and the principal temples. But the details of the topography of Carthage are still very obscure for the most part.

An unsolved problem, of special interest in reference to the siege of Carthage by Scipio, is the exact position of the Byrsa, where the Carthaginians made their last desperate stand. Dr. Davis, who has the first claim to attention, in right of his long and extensive labours in excavating the ruins, places the Byrsa above the bay which forms a natural

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<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne*, p. 11.

harbour between the smaller cisterns (B) and Cape Carthage, on a hill near the sea, called Burj-Jedced. M. Beulé and others identify the Hill of St. Louis with the ancient Byrsa.<sup>1</sup> On a mere survey of the ground, the latter position appears preferable, both from its superior height and from its proximity to the artificial harbour (A). But the remains which have been hitherto found are not in harmony with this theory, nor is it consistent with Appian's description of the taking of Carthage by the Romans. For the Hill of St. Louis would not hold so large a garrison as are said to have defended the Byrsa; and Appian mentions that Scipio, before the surrender of the citadel, gained an elevated position, from which he could survey what was going on. Hence it may be inferred that the ancient stronghold of the Carthaginians was not upon the Hill of St. Louis, but on a larger and lower plateau. On the other hand, it is probable that the limits of the Byrsa were extended beyond the original fort, as the town increased; and it has been suggested that its enlarged space may have comprised the Hill of St. Louis.<sup>2</sup> This reasonable supposition goes far to explain the difficulties of the question. It would correspond to the enlargement of the city of London westward across the Holborn valley, from Ludgate to Temple Bar.

On the ground which Dr. Davis concludes to be the site of the Byrsa, he has discovered the massive walls of a temple, measuring 186 feet in length by 79 feet in width.<sup>3</sup> Twenty feet of the walls remain in good preservation, beneath the accumulated soil. He identifies this building with the famous Temple of Æsculapius, from the roof of which Hasdrubal's wife flung herself and her sons into the flames, disdaining to surrender. It was approached by sixty steps, many of which may still be traced. The deity who was worshipped at Carthage under attributes which the Romans

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 468; Beulé, *Fouilles et Découvertes*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Blakesley, *Algeria*.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, p. 380, etc.; Bosworth Smith, p. 452.



took for those of Æsculapius, was called by the Phœnicians Ashmon, or Esmun.<sup>1</sup> He was a personification of the astronomical circle of the signs of the zodiac, and was represented as a man bearing a serpent. In this form he has also a separate place in the celestial vault as a constellation, under the name of Ophiuchus, or Serpentarius. There is in the Museum of local Antiquities at Arles, a remarkable mutilated statue, which is there called Mithras, but is probably intended for the Punic Æsculapius, or Ashmon. It represents a human figure wrapped in the folds of a serpent, the spaces between the folds being filled with the signs of the zodiac. The sculpture is admirable, and seems to belong nearly to the best period of Roman art.

Between the Temple of Ashmon and the sea-shore are the remains of a circular building, which appears to have been a Christian church. A marble cross has been found among the ruins, and several lamps of terra cotta, bearing sacred symbols. Dr. Davis discusses at some length the probability of this being one of the two churches which are said by Victor Vitensis to have been named after St. Cyprian, one of which was erected over the place of his martyrdom, the other over his grave.<sup>2</sup> He concludes with good reason that those sites were both outside the town. But there was another Church of St. Cyprian, which is mentioned by St. Augustine as being near the harbour. "My mother protesting that she would not return without me, I induced her to spend the night in a place very near the ship, where was a memorial Church of St. Cyprian."<sup>3</sup> The remains which have been found correspond well with this description.

The site of the Forum is thought to be discovered above the harbour, at the foot of the Hill of St. Louis, where M. de Sainte-Marie has found a large number of Punic inscriptions, chiefly votive tablets. These were sent to Paris, and are

<sup>1</sup> Movers, *Phönizier*; Ersch and Grüber, *Karthago*.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, p. 388.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions*, v. 8.

now in the Louvre, having narrowly escaped destruction on the voyage.

The Circus which, as has been related, Alypius used to frequent in his youth, is clearly traceable on the landward side, not far from the larger cisterns. Its dimensions are 2250 feet in length by 300 feet in width.

The Theatre may, perhaps, be marked by a heap of ruins near the shore, between the harbour and Goletta. Allusion to this edifice is made by Apuleius, once noted as a magician, but now chiefly known as author of the romance, *The Golden Ass*, a work which exhibits vividly and shamelessly the superstition, witchcraft, and moral depravity prevailing in Africa and other parts of the empire about the time of Tertullian. Apuleius was a native of Madaura, in Numidia, where Augustine studied. His works are noticed by several ecclesiastical writers, and his fable of Cupid and Psyche has been interpreted as a spiritual allegory.<sup>1</sup> The passage in which he speaks of the Theatre occurs in another work called *Florida*, made up of rhetorical scraps from his orations. He says, "I must congratulate Carthage on having so many friends of learning. The audience is worthy of so great a city, the place is fit for so great an audience. But I will not dwell on the marble of the floor, on the paintings of the proscenium, the columns of the stage, the height of the roof, the splendour of the cornice, nor yet on the performances which are exhibited here at other times, the dances, the comedies, the tragedies, the pantomimes, the feats of the acrobat and the juggler."<sup>2</sup>

Among the ruins excavated by Dr. Davis are remains of temples ascribed by him to Saturn, Juno, and other deities. Hitherto the evidence which has been produced is insufficient to identify these remains. The most tangible discovery made as yet is a large mosaic pavement of admirable workmanship, with figures of musicians and colossal heads, one

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<sup>1</sup> Fulgentius, *Mythologia*, lib. iii. ; see also Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, book iv. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Apuleius, *Florida*, xviii.

of which, crowned with ears of corn, is probably intended to represent the goddess Ceres. The style of art is apparently that of the Roman period. This pavement, with some others, representing hunting and fishing scenes, is now in the British Museum.

One of the most magnificent temples of ancient Carthage, that of the goddess called *Cœlestis*, is expressly said by Prosper, or the author of the work which bears his name, to have been destroyed.<sup>1</sup> The foundations were dug up, and the ground was made a Christian cemetery. It is certain, therefore, that any existing remains which indicate the site of a temple must not be identified with the famous Temple of *Cœlestis*. As to its situation, we are not without means of forming a probable conjecture, although the facts to be reconciled present some difficulty. The goddess *Cœlestis* was doubtless the Phœnician *Ashtoreth*, named by the Romans *Juno* or *Venus*, and usually worshipped on an elevated spot. Prosper states that the precincts of this temple at Carthage were nearly two miles in circumference, and included several other temples. The obvious inference from this statement is that the ground was at some distance from the more crowded parts of the city, and its use as a cemetery confirms this inference. It is quite inconceivable that a central space, two miles in circumference, should be given up to the burial of the dead, at a time when the city of Carthage was unusually crowded; for this event took place a few years after the fall of Rome, when Carthage was the chief resort of Roman fugitives.

The analogy of the Roman catacombs, a mile or two outside the walls, suggests a corresponding site for the Christian cemeteries of Carthage. Moreover, the cemeteries which actually exist near Cape Ghamart, on the side of the hill which overlooks Carthage from the north, are in a position which is appropriate for the site of a temple to *Astarte*, being a high place, probably the same to which *Æneas*, in Virgil's

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<sup>1</sup> *Promiss.*, iii. 38; see *ante*, pp. 197, 258.

poem, was directed by Venus in order to survey the rising city.

Virgil gives several particulars of the topography of Carthage, which he is likely to have collected with care from the colonists who were sent thither by Augustus. According to his description in the first book of the *Æneid*, the original Phœnician Temple of Juno stood in a grove in the middle of the city :—

“ Full in the centre of the town there stood,  
Thick set with trees, a venerable wood :  
The Tyrians, landing near this holy ground,  
And digging here, a prosperous omen found :  
From under earth a courser’s head they drew,  
Their growth and future fortune to foreshew.  
This fated sign their founders Juno gave,  
Of a soil fruitful, and a people brave.  
Sidonian Dido here, with solemn state,  
Did Juno’s temple build and consecrate.”<sup>1</sup>

That the goddess who is called Juno by Virgil is the same whose temple was afterwards celebrated under the name of *Cœlestis*, is most likely. But it is also likely that the Roman temple was erected on a different site. A curse had been laid by Scipio on the ancient city, and if the urgent necessities of trade and increasing population led the inhabitants to ignore the curse in later years, it is at all events highly improbable that the Temple of Juno would be rebuilt on its original site by Scipio’s fellow-countrymen.

The difficulty of reconciling the scanty data which are accessible on this subject may be illustrated, not unfairly, by supposing a similar case with regard to the topography of London. If the sites of the London churches were effaced, and an antiquarian had before him certain notices of St. Mary-le-Bow, in Cheapside, and also of the church which gives its name to the borough of Marylebone, without any means of distinguishing the two, he would have a problem

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<sup>1</sup> *Æneid*, i., Dryden’s translation.

not unlike that which meets us in trying to fix the site of the Temple of Cœlestis at Carthage; and the problem at Carthage may be solved in a similar manner, by placing one temple, and that the more noted, beyond the city walls.

The distance of the Catacomb Hill (E) is not of itself an objection to this view. The celebrated Temple of Apollo, at Daphne, near Antioch, was at a greater distance from the city to which it belonged. Where the dead were buried, the living could have gone to worship. Separated by a pleasant valley from the other hills of Carthage, and intersected by several romantic hollows, wooded with palm and almond and olive trees, the Catacomb Hill, Gebel Kawi, rises to a height of nearly three hundred feet. It is one vast necropolis. "Everywhere, a few feet below the surface of the ground, are labyrinths of low vaulted chambers, often communicating with each other, or separated only by narrow walls of rock."<sup>1</sup> In one of these sepulchral chambers was found what Dr. Davis supposes to be a rude drawing of the seven-branched golden candlestick. "All traces of the original occupants have long since disappeared, and the vacant space is often tenanted by the jackal and the hyena."

M. Beulé was unable to find any trace of Christianity in the caverns of Gebel Kawi; but he found a coin of Heraclius at the feet of a skeleton in one of the caves,<sup>2</sup> which might suggest the presumption that they were used for sepulture at the latest period of the empire.

The highest point within the peninsula of Carthage is occupied by an Arab village called Sidi bu Said, the "village of the Saint." It is asserted that the saint from whom the village takes its name is no other than the crusading King of France, St. Louis, who, according to local tradition, died on that height.<sup>3</sup> Nothing is in itself more probable than that the king, when prostrated with fever, should have

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<sup>1</sup> Bosworth Smith, p. 463; Davis, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> Beulé, *Fouilles et Découvertes*, ii. p. 43; also *Journal des Savants* (1860)

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 382.

been removed a short distance from the pestilential air of the camp to this secure position, where he could breathe the purer atmosphere of the hills and the sea. His son was conveyed under similar circumstances on board ship; but there are obvious reasons why the king himself should not leave the neighbourhood of his army, already disheartened by his illness.

Not far from Malka, the Arab village which is formed of the greater cisterns (C) of ancient Carthage, are the remains of an amphitheatre. It is described by M. de Sainte-Marie as beside the railway from Goletta to Marsa, which is a district of villas and pleasure-gardens on the Carthaginian peninsula, and the favourite resort of wealthy citizens of Tunis. The marble steps and the exterior walls have disappeared; but crumbling heaps of masonry give the means of observing the general form of the Amphitheatre, and taking measurements. These are given as 90 mètres by 56 mètres,<sup>1</sup> or nearly 300 feet by 186 feet. An Arabian historian, Edrisi, writing in the thirteenth century, gives a larger circumference than these dimensions would imply. He says, "This building is circular in form, and is composed of 50 arcades, each of which covers a space of 23 feet, making 1150 feet for the total circumference. Above these arches rise five other tiers of the same form and dimensions. At the top of each arcade is a frieze, where one may see figures of men, animals, and ships, carved with infinite skill." Comparing this measurement with the other, and assuming the form to be that of an ellipse, it represents a building at least 100 feet longer and wider. A circumference of 1150 feet would be about that of an ellipse of which the axes are 400 feet and 300 feet respectively. Even these larger dimensions, however, are inferior to those of the Amphitheatres of Arles and Verona, and fall very far short of those of the Coliseum. The dimensions of the Amphitheatre at Arles are 459 feet by 341 feet; at Verona, 546 feet by 438 feet. The Coliseum

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<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne.*

measures 620 feet by 513 feet. There is another amphitheatre in Africa, larger than that of Carthage, at Thysdrus, near Adrumetum, the metropolis of Byzacena. Its dimensions are 429 feet by 368 feet ; and its ruins appear, from an engraving published by Dr. Davis, to be in a more perfect state than those of the Coliseum, or any other.

The comparatively small dimensions of the area of the Amphitheatre at Carthage were partially compensated by its unusual number of six tiers. It may be estimated to have held from thirty to forty thousand spectators, a vast concourse. Want of space in the peninsula of Carthage would account for the height of the Amphitheatre in proportion to its length and breadth. But there was also less occasion in Africa than in Europe for a spacious arena. It seems from the story of Alypius that gladiatorial shows were not common at Carthage. The wars with nimble Moorish mountaineers brought no such hosts of captives to Carthage as were led from the Danube to be butchered in Italy. Such carnage as Trajan provided for the amusement of the Roman populace, when he exhibited ten thousand Dacians, required ample room. For single combats of men and beasts a more compact arrangement of spectators was likely to be preferred.

It was in the Amphitheatre of Carthage that St. Perpetua and her companions suffered martyrdom. Their remains are said by Victor to have been preserved in the church called Ad Majorum, which was burned in the destructive fire which took place when the city was stormed by the Vandals, A.D. 439.

The following is a list of churches, all of which are known to have existed in or near Carthage, but which have not yet been traced<sup>1</sup> :—

- |                             |  |                           |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1. St. Perpetua Restituta.  |  | 4. Ad Majorum.            |
| 2. The Basilica of Faustus. |  | 5. The Scillitan Martyrs. |
| 3. St. Agileus.             |  | 6. St. Celerinus.         |

<sup>1</sup> *La Tunisie Chrétienne.*



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|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 7. Novarum.                  | 15. St. Paul.        |
| 8. St. Gratian.              | 16. St. Mary.        |
| 9. St. Honorius.             | 17. St. Prima.       |
| 10. St. Theodore Theoprepian | 18. The Palace.      |
| 11. Tricillarium.            | 19, 20. St. Cyprian. |
| 12, 13. The Second District. | 21. St. Julian.      |
| 14. St. Peter.               |                      |

Several of these basilicas are known in connection with events in the history of the African Church. The Church of St. Perpetua, called Restituta from having been recovered from the Donatists,<sup>1</sup> was originally a Temple of Baal or Apollo, then given by Constantine to the Catholics, afterwards taken by the Donatists, then restored, and at length given by Genseric, during the Vandal dominion, to the Arians. It was the cathedral church of Carthage at the time of Bishop Aurelius, who held his first Council there, A.D. 397. Its situation is known to have been near the Forum.

The Basilica of Faustus, in which the great Council of A.D. 418 was held, and in which the good Bishop Deogratias spread beds for the Roman captives of Genseric, is another of the principal churches. There appears to be no clue to its situation.

Of the two large Churches of St. Cyprian which Genseric gave to the Arians, one is described as in the Mappalicus, a name which is probably connected with the Numidian name for their huts. It is further said to have been near the fish-ponds, a description which corresponds best with the western side of the town, in the neighbourhood of the meres which lie on both sides of the isthmus. The other church, erected on the field where St. Cyprian was beheaded, is probably to be sought at a greater distance, in the direction of Utica.

The Church of St. Agileus, which was given by the Vandal king, Guntamund, to the Catholics during the episcopate of Eugenius, had a cemetery attached to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleury, xx. 24.

It is easier to find traces of pagan Carthage than of Christian Carthage. The remains of churches have disappeared, while the masonry of an earlier age is left. Partly this is to be attributed to the animosity of the Moslems, partly to the rapacity of Genoese and Pisan merchants, who carried off shiploads of marble for use in Italy. It is said <sup>1</sup> that the cathedral of Pisa was constructed chiefly of materials from Carthage; and this would account for the removal of such carved stones as would be fittest for ecclesiastical use.

Among the inscriptions which have been dug up in excavating the ruins of Carthage, are several in Punic characters, expressive of vows to Ashmon, Baal, Melkarth, Tanith, or Astarte. Christian inscriptions have also been found, but in less abundance. The Chapel of St. Louis is built of stones from the neighbourhood, some of which bear inscriptions. One, in fragments, beside the doorway, is inscribed with the words, "VICTORINA IN PACE," preceded by a monogram of Christ, and followed by a palm branch. In that simple monument is suggested a history of faith which has perhaps no other record. A stone in the wall of the bey's palace at Mohammedia, two hours' journey south-east of Tunis, bears the names of three Christian bishops, Romanus, Rusticus, and Exitiosus, the last name being inserted afterwards in smaller characters between the two others: "ROMANUS, EPISCO. IN PACE," "RUSTICUS. EPISCOPUS IN PACE," "EXITIOSUS EPCP. IN PC." The date of the first of these, which is clearer than the rest, is 519, during the reign of the Vandal king, Thrasimund.

Several other remains of a similar kind, more or less incomplete, are to be found among the buildings of the neighbourhood.

A society was formed at Paris in 1837 for the purpose of exploring the ruins, and continuing the researches previously made by Falbe, Dureau de la Malle, and Sir Grenville Temple. Little, however, was accomplished by the society,

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Carthage."

and the labours of Dr. Davis, extended over several years, yielded more important results. M. Beulé visited Carthage in 1859, and explored the remains, with the advantage of experience gained in similar researches in Greece. During his visit he had several opportunities of observing the destructiveness of the Arab population. When he said to a native workman, who was breaking a marble monument, "You are destroying the tombs of your forefathers," the man asked, "Did they know Mohammed and the true God?" and on being answered "No," proceeded with his work of demolition, pulverizing ancient carvings to make cement. Want of time and funds hindered M. Beulé from adding much to previous discoveries.

On the whole, the explorations at Carthage have yielded hitherto less than might have been reasonably expected. A few fragmentary sculptures, some interesting mosaic pavements, lamps, and funereal inscriptions, are nearly all that has been discovered as yet. But even this is enough to give encouragement to fresh attempts. A combination of knowledge and perseverance, with adequate funds, like that which has within a few years accomplished so much at Troy, Olympia, and Mycenæ, may hereafter unearth treasures of no less value and rarity at Carthage.







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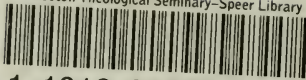






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